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Under very extraordinary circumstances beyond our control, the publication of the Gaṇeśa Number has been delayed. The readers are requested to bear with us and excuse us for any inconvenience caused to them due to this delay.

—Editor

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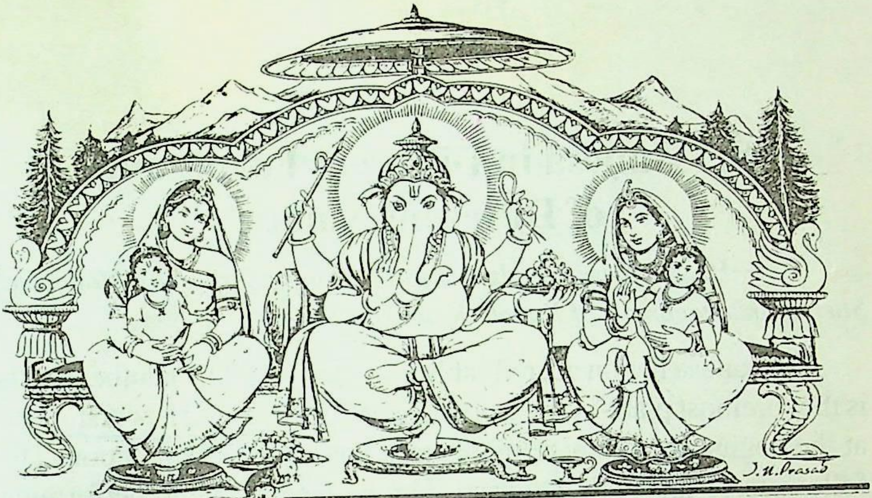
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Vīra Gaṇapati

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते। पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते॥



THE KALYANA–KALPATARU

OR

THE BLISS

A MONTHLY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF SPIRITUAL IDEAS AND LOVE FOR GOD

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अधर्मोपचयो धर्मापचयो हि यदा भवेत्।
साधून् संरक्षितुं दुष्टांस्ताडितुं सम्भवाम्यहम्॥
उच्छिद्याधर्मनिचयं धर्मं संस्थापयामि च।
हन्मि दुष्टांश्च दैत्यांश्च नानालीलाकरो मुदा॥

"Whenever there is increase in unrighteousness and decline in righteousness, then in order to protect the virtuous people and punish the evil-doers, I appear in the world. Extirpating the heap of evil, I re-establish the virtues on the earth. I kill the evil-doers and the demons and play My roles sportingly and joyfully."

(*Gaṇeśa Gītā* III. 10-11)

Śrī Gaṇeśa in Different Forms and of Different Names

—His Holiness Jagadguru Shri Jayendra Sarasvatiji Maharaja, Shri Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitha

Śrī Gaṇeśa has an accreditable place in the Vedic pantheon. His is the foremost place in the worship of deities. Gaṇeśa is worshipped at the beginning of any religious ritual or auspicious function. The followers of the *Veda-Dharma* (Hindus), even, while performing *Sandhyopāsana (Sandhyāvandanam)*, everyday in the morning, at noon and the evening, chant at the outset a verse invoking Gaṇeśa's blessings. This prayer is recited even before performing *Japa* of the *Mantra* or *Pūjā* pertaining to deities such as Sūrya,Śiva, Devī, Viṣṇu etc. This verse in the form of a prayer runs thus—

शुक्लाम्बरधरं देवं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम्।
प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत्सर्वविघ्नोपशान्तये।।

Among the eighteen *Purāṇas* of *Bhagavān* Vyāsa, the *Padma Purāṇa,* the *Skanda Purāṇa* and the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* and some of the minor *Paurāṇika* works such as the *Vināyaka Purāṇa* and the *Bhārgava Purāṇa* contain details about a large number of forms and names of Gaṇeśa. On a perusal of the sections pertaining to Gaṇeśa in these old works, the forms and names of more than forty can be gleaned.

In the *Āgamas* the names and forms of sixteen types of Gaṇeśa are available along with prayer verses for meditation of each of these forms.

(1) Bāla Gaṇapati (बाल गणपति)—

करस्थकदलीचूतपनसेक्षुकपित्थकम् ।
बालसूर्यप्रभं वन्दे देवं बालगणाधिपम्।।

"I bow to Bāla Gaṇapati who has in his hands the plantain, the mango, the jack and *Kapittha* (wood-apple), fruits and who holds

the sugar-cane. Obeisance to the child Gaṇapati who shines like the morning sun."

(2) Taruṇa Gaṇapati (तरुण गणपति)—

पाशाङ्कुशापूपकपित्थजम्बूस्वदन्तशालीक्षुमपि स्वहस्तैः।
धत्ते सदा यस्तरुणारुणाभः पायात् स युष्माँस्तरुणो गणेशः।।

"Having the noose, goad, sweet cake, the wood-apple, *Jambū* fruit (black berry), his own tusk, corn sheaf, and the sugar-cane, in his eight hands and shining bright as the midday sun, this young Gaṇeśa may protect us all."

(3) Bhakta Gaṇapati (भक्त गणपति)—

नालिकेराम्रकदलीगुडपायसधारिणम् ।
शरच्चन्द्राभवपुषं भजे भक्तगणाधिपम्।।

"I bow to Gaṇapati who is kind to his devotees, who has the coconut, the mango, the plantain-fruit and sweet treacle in his hands and whose complexion is like the moon-light of *Śarad*."

(4) Vīra Gaṇapati (वीर गणपति)—

वेतालशक्तिशरकार्मुकचक्रखड्गखट्वांगमुद्गरगदाङ्कुशनागपाशान्।
शूलं च कुन्तपरशुध्वजमुद्वहन्तं वीरं गणेशमरुणं सततं स्मरामि।।

"I meditate upon Vīra Gaṇeśa of red complexion who holds the *Vetāla*, spear, arrow, bow, discus, sword, missile, club, mace, goad, serpent-noose, pike, lance, axe and flag respectively in his sixteen hands."

This *Mūrti* is in standing pose.

(5) Śakti Gaṇapati (शक्ति गणपति)—

आलिङ्ग्य देवीं हरिताङ्गयष्टिं परस्पराश्लिष्टकटीनिवेशम्।
संध्यारुणं पाशसृणी वहन्तं भयापहं शक्तिगणेशमीडे।।

"Obeisance to Śakti Gaṇapati who is red in complexion like the red sky in the evening,who holds noose and goad in his hands, one of whose hands shows the *Abhaya Mudrā* (protection from fear) and whose hand is around the waist of his divine consort who is of green complexion and who also clings to her husband's waist."

(6) Dhvaja Gaṇapati (ध्वज गणपति)—

यः पुस्तकाक्षगुणदण्डकमण्डलुश्रीनिर्वर्त्यमानकरभूषणमिन्दुवर्णम्।
स्तम्बेरमाननचतुष्टयशोभमानं त्वां संस्मरेद्ध्वजगणाधिपते स धन्यः।।

"Whoever meditates upon you, Oh Dhvaja Gaṇapati, of complexion silvery like the moon, as having a book, a string of *Rudrākṣas,* a staff and a *Kamaṇḍalu* (water vessel) in your hands and shining with four faces like that of the elephant (facing the four directions) is indeed fortunate."

(7) Siddhi Gaṇapati (सिद्धि गणपति)—

पक्वचूतफलपुष्पमञ्जरीमिक्षुदण्डतिलमोदकैस्सह ।
उद्वहन् परशुहस्त ते नमः श्रीसमृद्धियुत देव पिङ्गल ।।

"Obeisance to Thee, *Deva*! who art of golden yellow hue, who holds the ripened mango, a cluster of flowers, the sugar-cane, sweet eatable in the shape of a small ball (*Modaka*) and an axe in Thy hands and in union with Śrī (*Devī*)."

(8) Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇapati (उच्छिष्ट गणपति)—

नीलाब्जंदाडिमीवीणाशालिगुञ्जाक्षसूत्रकम् ।
दधदुच्छिष्टनामायं गणेशः पातु मेचकः ।।

"May Gaṇeśa with the name *Ucchiṣṭa*, who is holding the blue lotus,the lute made of pomegranate wood, bunch of corn ...and *Rudrākṣa* string in his six hands, who is dark-blue in colour, protect us."

(9) Vighna Gaṇapati (विघ्न गणपति)—

शंखेक्षुचापकुसुमेषुकुठारपाशचक्रस्वदन्तसृणिमञ्जरिकाशराद्यैः ।
प्राणिश्रितैः परिसमीहितभूषणश्रीर्विघ्नेश्वरो विजयते तपनीयगौरः ।।

"Gaṇeśa shines with the conch, with the bow of sugar-cane, with flowery arrows, with the axe, with noose, with discus, and his broken tusk, with a goad, cluster of flowers, in His hands. He glitters with a complexion of golden colour. He is bedecked with ornaments. He is *Vighneśvara*—creator of troubles and at the same time the one who wipes off all kinds of troubles and hurdles of devotees."

(10) Kṣipra Gaṇapati (क्षिप्र गणपति)—

दन्त-कल्पलतापाश-रत्नकुम्भाङ्कुशोज्ज्वलम् ।
बन्धूककमनीयाभं ध्यायेत् क्षिप्रगणाधिपम् ।।

"Let us meditate upon Kṣipra-Gaṇapati, of the lustre of *Bandhūka* (red coloured) flower, who has the tusk, the *Kalpaka* creeper as the noose in his hands and showing *Abhaya Mudrā*

(protection from fear) by one of his hands and who is giver of benefits quickly to devotees."

This *Mūrti* is in standing pose.

(11) Heramba Gaṇapati (हेरम्ब गणपति)—

अभयवरदहस्तः पाशदन्ताक्षमालासृणिपरशुदधानो मुद्गरं मोदकं च।
फलमधिगतसिंहः पञ्चमातङ्गवक्त्रो गणपतिरतिगौरः पातु हेरम्बनाथः।।

"Heramba Gaṇapati has five faces like the face of the elephant. The lowest pair of the ten hands indicate *Abhaya* (protection from fear) and *Varada* (granting of boons) *Mudrās*. The other eight hands are holding the noose, tusk, *Rudrākṣa Mālā*, goad, axe, long pole-like hammer, sweet ball-like cake (*Modakam*) and fruits respectively. He is seated on a lion. He is of white hue. May this Heramba Gaṇapati protect us!"

(12) Lakṣmī Gaṇapati (लक्ष्मी गणपति)—

विभ्राणंशुकबीजपूरकमिलन्माणिक्यकुम्भाङ्कुशान्
पाशं कल्पलतां च खड्ग विलसज्ज्योतिस्सुधानिर्झरः।
श्यामेनात्तसरोरुहेण सहितं देवीद्वयं चान्तिके
गौराङ्गो वरदानहस्तसहितो लक्ष्मीगणेशोऽवतात्।।

"Śrī Lakṣmī Gaṇapati has the parrot, lemon fruit, a vessel made of rubies, goad, noose, the *Kalpalatā* creeper, a sword in seven of his eight hands and the lowest of the hands in the right side is in the *Abhaya* pose. On either side of this Gaṇeśa are seated His two divine spouses having blue lotuses in their hands. May this Lakṣmī Gaṇapati of white hue shed His grace on devotees."

(13) Mahā Gaṇapati (महागणपति)—

हस्तीन्द्राननमिन्दुचूडमरुणच्छायं त्रिनेत्रं रसा-
दाश्लिष्टं प्रिययासपद्मकरया स्वाङ्कस्थया सन्ततम्।
बीजापूरगदेक्षुकार्मुकलसच्चक्राब्जपाशोत्पल-
व्रीह्यग्रस्वविषाणरत्नकलशान् हस्तैर्वहन्तं भजे॥

"I worship Mahā Gaṇapati who has the face of a majestic elephant, whose head is adorned by the moon, who is of red colour, who has three eyes, who is embraced by his spouse (sitting on his lap, holding a lotus in her right hand), who holds, in his hands, a big lemon fruit, the mace, the sugar-cane, the bow, the discus, the lotus,

noose, the blue lotus, a bunch of corn, tusk, vessels made of gems in his other eleven hands."

(14) Vijaya Gaṇapati (विजय गणपति)—

पाशाङ्कुशस्वदन्ताम्रफलवानाखुवाहनः ।
विघ्नं निहन्तु नस्सर्वं रक्तवर्णो विनायकः ।।

"May Vināyaka (Vijaya Gaṇapati), holding the noose, the goad, the tusk and the mango fruit in his hands and seated on the mouse and shining the blood-like red colour, destroy all our troubles and hindrances."

(15) Nṛtta Gaṇapati (नृत्त गणपति)—

पाशाङ्कुशापूपकुठारदन्तचञ्चत्कराक्लृप्तवराङ्गुलीयकम् ।
पीतप्रभं कल्पतरोरधस्थं भजामि नृत्तोपपदं गणेशम् ।।

"I worship Gaṇeśa who is dancing, who remains under the *Kalpaka* tree, who is of yellow hue, who holds the noose, the goad, sweet cake, axe and a tusk in His hands and who has beautiful finger-ring."

(16) Ūrdhva Gaṇapati (ऊर्ध्व गणपति)—

कल्हारशालिकमलेक्षुकचापबाणदन्तप्ररोहकगदी कनकोज्ज्वलाङ्गः ।
आलिङ्गनोद्यतकरो हरिताङ्गयष्ट्या देव्या करोतु शुभमूर्ध्वगणाधिपो नः ।।

"May Śrī Ūrdhva Gaṇapati having a white water lily, bunch of corn, the red lotus, the sugar-cane bow, arrow, the tusk and a staff in His hands, who is shining greenish and who is embracing His divine consort, bless us with prosperity."

Apart from the sixteen Gaṇeśa forms mentioned in the *Āgamas*, quite a large number of forms and names of Gaṇeśa are found in *Purāṇas*, traditional information, temples having subshrines of Gaṇeśa, and some temples dedicated solely for Gaṇeśa.

The names available are given below—

(1) Vara Gaṇapati (2) Kṣipra-Prasāda Gaṇapati (3) Sṛṣṭi Gaṇapati (4) Uddaṇḍa Gaṇapati (5) Ṛṇamocana Gaṇapati (6) Ekākṣara Gaṇapati (7) Tryakṣara Gaṇapati (8) Dvimukha Gaṇapati (9) Trimukha Gaṇapati (10) Yoga Gaṇapati (11) Durga Gaṇapati (12) Śaṅkaṭahara Gaṇapati (13) Vakratuṇḍa Gaṇapati (14) Cintāmaṇi Gaṇapati (15) Dhūmraketu Gaṇapati (16) Vighnarāja Gaṇapati.

There are some special forms of Gaṇeśa, worshipped in certain sacred *Kṣetras* of India.

The shrine of Dhuṇḍhirāja Gaṇapati occupies a prominent place in the sacred city of Varanasi. There is almost a similar *Gaṇeśa Kṣetra* known as Tondi on the way to Rameshvaram in the far South. The *Gaṇeśa Mūrti* at this village and at a small temple dedicated to Gaṇeśa at upper, further South and near Rameshvaram are said to have been worshipped by Śrī Rāma. It is strange to note that these two shrines are open at top without any ceiling.

Mayūreśa Gaṇeśa—

Maharashtra accounts for a pretty large number of people following the *Gāṇapatya* school of worship. In Maharashtra there are eight specially sacred places famous for worship of Gaṇapati. Of them one is Morgaon (Mayūragrāmam). Usually Gaṇapati icons are seen seated on the *Mūṣaka*. But at Morgaon, the *Mūrti* of Gaṇeśa is seated on a peacock. The *Purāṇa* pertaining to Morgaon tells of a Dakṣiṇāvartam as the capital of Gaṇeśa.

Dakṣiṇāvarta Gaṇapati—

There is a village known as Tiruvalancuzhi, on the bank of the Kāverī—one of the seven sacred rivers of India. The village stands about six kilometres west of Kumbakonam which is famous for its one day *Kumbha-melā* called as *Mahāmāgham*, happening once in twelve years, when Jupiter and moon occupy the zodiacal sign of *Siṁha* (leo), the asterism of the day being *Maghā* of the *Kumbha* month, (Kumbhakonam is a famous municipal town in the Tanjavur district of Tamilnadu). There is a temple of Śiva in the village of Tiruvalancuzhi. The presiding *Śivaliṅga* in the temple is eulogised in the *Tevāram* hymns of the Tamil saints, Appār and Sambandār. But the *Gaṇapati Mūrti* in this temple has gained celebrity as *Gaṇeśa Rājadhānī* (the capital of Gaṇeśa empire) and the shrine of this deity is named as Dakṣiṇāvartam in the *Mayūreśa Purāṇa* referred to in the previous paragraph. The separate shrine of Gaṇeśa at Tiruvalancuzhi is noted for its architectural and sculptural splendour. The stone window-pane,called in Tamil as *Palakaṇi* in

the front part of this shrine—has sixteen holes which symbolise the sixteen primary forms of Gaṇeśa (*Ṣoḍaśa Gaṇapati*) and the sixteen *Kalās* which mark fulness (*Pūrṇatvam*). In the different forms of the *Mūrtis* (icons) of Gaṇeśa, we find the trunk twisted to the left side. But the *Mūrti* of Gaṇeśa in the Śiva temple at Tiruvalancuzhi has the trunk twisted to His right side. Hence the *Gaṇeśa Mūrti* there is known as *Dakṣiṇāvarta-Gaṇapati*, (*Valampuri Gaṇapati,* in Tamil language). Even as the *Gaṇeśa Mūrti* of this sacred place is Dakṣiṇāvarta, the river Kāverī, (flowing a little away from the temple), also has a right side turn in its course. Being white in colour, this *Gaṇeśa Mūrti* is also known as *Śveta* (white) Gaṇapati. The *Purāṇas* tell of Indra,lord of the celestials, as having worshipped the *Śveta Gaṇapati.*

In the sacred city of Kanchi, there is a separate temple for Gaṇeśa, near the temple of Devī Kāmākṣī. The *Mūrti* of Gaṇeśa in this temple holds a conch in one of His hands and so He is popular as Śaṅkhapāṇi Vināyaka. Inside the temple of Śrī Ekāmranātha, there is a small shrine (in the thousand pillared *Maṇḍapa*) in which the *Mūrti* of *Vikaṭacakra Vināyaka* is enshrined.

Even in temples of Viṣṇu, Vināyaka has subshrines. *Vaiṣṇavas* worship Gaṇeśa as Viṣvaksena.

In spite of the prevalence of multifarious forms and names of Gaṇeśa, it is peculiar to note that in some *Saṁskṛta* verses invoking the blessings of Śrī Gaṇeśa, there is no reference to any of His many names though there are descriptions of His forms. At the outset, one such verse beginning with the words *Śuklāmbaradharaṁ Viṣṇum* has been quoted herein. Some other similar verses will be found interesting. There is a verse running thus—

मातामहमहाशैलं महस्तदपितामहम्।
कारणं जगतां वन्दे कण्ठादुपरि वारणम्।।

The verse says—"I bow to Him who looks like the elephant, above his neck, whose maternal grandfather is the great mountain (Himavān), who has no paternal grandfather (since Parameśvara,Gaṇeśa's father has no parents) and who is the basic cause of the universe."

May Mahāgaṇapati vouchsafe His choicest blessings on devotees. May Vighneśvara curb all troubles of the universe ! May Gaṇeśa in His *Praṇava* (six *Makāra*) *Svarūpa* shed true knowledge on all !

Fathers are of five types and mothers are of many kinds. *Vedas* state that the sons are also of five kinds. Fathers include the teacher, food-giver, protector from fear, the birth-giver and one who gives his daughter. These five are stated in the *Vedas* to be fathers of human beings.

Mothers—the wife of the preceptor, the real mother, a lady other than the mother who gives her breast to suck, the sister of father, elder sister, step mother and daughter-in-law who feeds one.

Sons—servant, disciple, adopted child, the real son, a refugee. The four, other than the real son, are known as *Dharma Putra.* They cannot inherit the property. It is the real son only who gets the title for inheritance.

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (VIII. 46—49)

Action and renunciation both are instrumental to emancipation. In between these two, the action is decidedly superior to renunciation. One who remains unperturbed in contrary experiences, who does not feel aversion to anybody and who does not desire anything, makes himself straightaway free from the shackles of action and should be treated as ever-renouncer. It is only foolish persons who say that action and renunciation produce different fruits. The wise may adopt anyone of the two. The same result can be obtained treading the path of action which one can expect from renunciation. One who knows the essence of action and renunciation, really knows.

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (IV. 2—5)

The Selfsame God is Adored in the Aspects of Śrī Gaṇeśa, Śiva, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and Others

—*Late Sri Jayadayal Goyandka*

The formless *Brahma* out of affection for the devotees and for their redemption, grants them His vision by manifesting Himself. The description of His manifest forms, is beyond human intellect for these are endless. He reveals Himself in the form preferred by His devotees and grants them His divine vision. God is not free to manifest Himself in the form of His choice rather it depends upon the choice of His devotees. At first Arjuna expressed the desire to see His cosmic form then to see the four-armed form and still later he desired to see the two-armed form. Lord Kṛṣṇa who is looked upon by His devotees with affection, granted to Arjuna as desired by him, the vision of all the three forms and at the same time imparted to him at length the knowledge of the unmanifest divinity. Likewise a devotee can have the vision of the Lord in the same form in which he adores Him.

Therefore, one need not change the object of his adoration. Whatever form we adore—Lord Viṣṇu, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, Nṛsiṁha, mother goddess, Gaṇeśa etc., it is in fact adoration of God. No change is to be brought about in the practice of remembrance. The thing that needs to be changed, is our narrow approach about Him. A devotee while practising adoration of the form of his choice, should always bear in mind that the Lord adored by him unmanifestedly pervades the animate and the inanimate objects, is omniscient and whatever is happening anywhere, is constantly watched by Him; He is omniscient, competent to do or undo anything, endowed with all virtues, the witness of all, the embodiment of Knowledge, Truth and Bliss. The Lord of his choice through His

own divine plays assumes different forms as desired by the devotees and performs divine plays in order to grant redemption to His devotees.

In *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* Śrī Viṣṇu is upheld as the supreme and it is said therein that Śrī Viṣṇu is the creator, the sustainer and the destroyer. He is the Absolute *Brahma*—the Supreme Soul. He alone is Omniscient, All-powerful, All-permeating and the Supreme and there is none superior to Him. Likewise in *Śiva Purāṇa* Lord Śiva, in *Devībhāgavata* the goddess, in *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa,* Śrī Gaṇeśa and in *Saura Purāṇa* the sun-god are referred to as Supreme, All powerful, the supporter of the entire creation, the Absolute *Brahma* and the Supreme Soul. Such descriptions are found in all other *Purāṇas*. This gives rise to the conception that they are opposed to one another, one is superior to the rest of them and the description of their glories is an exaggeration. But the fact is that as for Pārvatī the crest-jewel of chaste ladies, Śrī Śiva alone is the Supreme, and as for goddess Lakṣmī, Śrī Viṣṇu is the Supreme so also the great *Ṛṣi* Vedavyāsa the author of the *Purāṇas*, keeping in view the aim that every adorer of God should without delay achieve God-realization, has given prominence to each God in the *Purāṇas* glorifying each one. After knowing it for certain that the names and forms of the principal deities described in each of the *Purāṇas* are in no way different from the divine Names and Forms, the above doubt can no longer remain. Every adorer, no matter what deity he adores, must attain the Supreme Goal of realization of the Absolute *Brahma* or the Supreme Soul—this aim of the author of the *Purāṇas* is highly noble and ultimately real. The object of upholding the supremacy of the principal deity, eulogized in a particular *Purāṇa*, is not to belittle the importance of other gods but to praise the deity concerned and this is designed to create unswerving pious devotion in the heart of the devotee for the particular *Purāṇa* and its principal deity and it sounds justified as well. In that way the spiritual observances of *Sādhaka* can be flawlessly mature and the Supreme Soul—the Absolute *Brahma* can be realized without delay.

Although the names and forms of the principal deities of all the *Purāṇas* and the sub-*Purāṇas,* are different from each other—yet all of them are directed towards one and the same *Brahma* for while describing their virtues, power, character, glory and prayers, effort has been made to present every deity in the form of *Brahma*. That is why the hymns sung in the praise of different deities almost strike a similar note and seem aptly to describe the Absolute *Brahma*—the embodiment of Knowledge, Truth and Bliss. The praise to eulogize the principal deities in *Purāṇas*, is not an exaggeration, for, as the principal deities are endowed with the aspect of Supreme Being, no description of any length can adequately describe the glory of Supreme which is inordinate, limitless and boundless. Whatever is said through tongue always falls short of the actuality. So the glory of God can in no way be described by anyone.

In nutshell whoever be the deity, the adorer should adore Him, regarding Him to be the Supreme Absolute *Brahma*. Only by adoring with such conviction, God who is the Supreme,the embodiment of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss, the Absolute *Brahma*, can be realised for all the names and forms being the divine names and forms, the adoration of the deities is verily the adoration of the Lord. So with the object of God-realization in view, whatever name and form is adored, the result is invariably the realization of the Supreme Absolute *Brahma*. Therefore regarding the deity of choice as Absolute *Brahma*, the repetition of the name and meditation upon the divine form, ought to be practised by man constantly and at all time.

कर्मण्यदक्षिणे साध्वि यागस्याहन्तुतत्फलम्।
प्राप्स्यामियजमानस्यसंपूर्णकर्मणः फलम्॥

"If after the sacrifice *Dakṣiṇā* is not given, I Myself take the entire fruit of that sacrifice."

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (VII. 35)

Lord Gaṇeśa

—*Swami Ramsukhdas*

Only one God in His entirety (समग्र)appears in five aspects of Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Śiva, Gaṇeśa and Śakti, according to the nature, faith, belief and liking etc., of the worshippers. Based on these five aspects of God, the five cults of *Vaiṣṇava*, *Saura*, *Śaiva*, *Gāṇapata* and *Śākta*, came into existence. The devotees of Lord Viṣṇu as either Rāma, Kṛṣṇa or Nṛsiṁha, are all known to be *Vaiṣṇavas*. The devotees of Sūrya are known as *Saura* while those of Śiva are known as *Śaiva*. In North India, *Vaiṣṇavas* are found in a large number while *Śaivas* form the majority in South. Lord Śiva had two sons—Kārtikeya and Gaṇeśa. Both are universally worshipped in South India. The devotees of Gaṇeśa are called *Gāṇapata*. There is a story in *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa* which tells that Pārvatī once observed *Puṇyaka Vrata* and after its completion Lord Kṛṣṇa incarnated Himself in the form of Gaṇeśa as her son. The worshipper of *Śakti* are known as *Śākta*. Lakṣmī, Sītā, Rādhā, Pārvatī or Durgā, whatever goddesses are there, they are all different aspects of *Śakti*. Thus the followers of all the five cults, accept their chosen deity as the Supreme God and treat the other four as secondary gods. Whenever a temple of any of the five is erected, that particular deity is the principal deity and the rest are subsidiary ones. Among these five also Gaṇeśa occupies a place of pride because in each and every auspicious function, *Gaṇeśa Pūjā* is foremost. No other God is given so much importance.

Once there was a debate held among gods as to which of them deserved foremost worship. It was stipulated that whosoever comes first after completing the circumambulation of the earth, will be

entitled to receive foremost worship. All gods on their mounts, set out for the race. Lord Gaṇeśa only made circumambulation of His parents and sat (quite satisfied). In the scriptures mother has been declared to be bigger than the earth and the father even higher than the sky.

माता गुरुतरा भूमेः खात्पितोच्चतरस्तथा।

(*Mahābhārata Vanaparva* III.3.60)

Thus the entire earth was circumambulated by moving around the parents and Gaṇeśa was declared eligible for foremost worship. At certain places it is found mentioned that He wrote Rāma on the ground and circumambulated it. Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa has also written—

महिमा जासु जान गनराऊ। प्रथम पूजिअत नाम प्रभाऊ॥

(*Mānasa* I. 19. 2)

On the occasion of Lord Śiva's marriage, it was Gaṇeśa who received the first worship. Here a doubt is raised that now Pārvatī is going to be married, Gaṇeśa would take birth afterward. The solution to this, has been given by Goswāmījī in the following way—"सुर अनादि जियँ जानि" (*Mānasa* I. 100) that is, the gods are beginningless. Just as the Lord Supreme is beginningless and whatever form He incarnates Himself in, He remains untainted, even so Lord Gaṇeśa is also eternal.

It was Lord Gaṇeśa who did scribe *Mahābhārata*. Vedavyāsa requested Gaṇeśa—"I have prepared in my mind the complete blue-print of *Mahābhārata*. Please, be kind enough to write it. I will go on dictating which you may please write down." Gaṇeśa acceded to it with condition that His pen should not stop even for a moment. Vedavyāsa accepted it but at the same time he placed another condition that Lord Gaṇeśa should not write any verse without understanding and appreciating it. Lord Gaṇeśa accepted this stipulation and started the work. Vyāsa during the course of dictation, off and on, dictated something like a riddle which Gaṇeśa was required to take sometime to understand thus His pen did stop for sometime and in the meanwhile Vyāsa managed to compose so

many verses. This way Lord Gaṇeśa along with the writing of *Mahābhārata* wrote *Gītā* as it formed a part of *Mahābhārata*. *Gītā* is narrated by the Lord Himself which proved very beneficial to the world and will continue to be so.

Lord Gaṇeśa is the God of intellect and bestower of best intellect. Formerly when the students started learning alphabets, they used to read as *Ga* for Gaṇeśa but of course nowadays they generally read *Ga* for *Gadahā*. This is why their intellect also become *Tāmasika* like that of an ass. The characteristics of *Tāmasika* intellect are given in *Gītā* as under—

अधर्मं धर्ममिति या मन्यते तमसावृता।
सर्वार्थान्विपरीतांश्च बुद्धिः सा पार्थ तामसी।।

(XVIII. 32)

"The intellect which imagines even *Adharma* to be *Dharma* and sees all other things upside-down—wrapped in ignorance, that intellect is *Tāmasika*, Arjuna."

A good *Anuṣṭhāna* (a mode of worship) is recommended for the students. Everyday after their bath etc., sitting on a seat covered with red cloth facing to the east, the student should make a *Japa* of the *Mantra*—"ॐ गं गणपतये नमः" on a rosary of *Rudrākṣa* or coral. This should be done at least twenty one rounds. This *Anuṣṭhāna* should start on the fourth day of bright fortnight. It will be still better to start it on the said date in the month of *Bhādrapada*. While commencing *Anuṣṭhāna* Lord Gaṇeśa should be worshipped in the beginning. While on the *Anuṣṭhāna*, *Caturthī* fast should also be observed. Doing this way for six months, one can have his intellect sharpened.

हसितविभूषितवदनो जनोऽस्तु सकलोऽपि मोदसम्पत्त्यै।
इति रददर्शितहृदयः स एकदन्तोऽस्तु मे शरणम्।।

For the preservation of cheerfulness, everyone should keep a smiling face—Lord Gaṇeśa manifesting this intent through His one tusked form—be refuge to us.

Śrī Gaṇeśa is Essentially the Same as Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Śiva and Others

—Late Sri Hanumanprasad Poddar

What is the true form of the Lord, is best known to Him alone but this much can confidently be asserted that in spite of being known by several names and forms, He is invariably one. God or truth can never be two different entities. God has countless forms, countless names and so are His divine plays. He reveals Himself at different places and different occasions in different names and forms. The devotees adore these various forms according to their own choice and feel gratified to have His vision in the desired form. But it should not be misconceived that the object of adoration of one devotee being different from that of the other, the two aspects adored essentially differ from each other. In fact He is invariably the cosmic being (*Brahma*). He is verily Rāma, He is Kṛṣṇa, He is Śiva, He is Viṣṇu, He is the embodiment of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss, He is the universal Matter, He is the sungod and He is Gaṇeśa.

The devotee, who is aware of this essential fact even though adoring with undivided mind, the desired aspect of his adoration, regards the various aspects of the Lord as varied aspects of his own object of adoration; and hence he is never opposed to anyone of them. In spite of adoring Śrī Kṛṣṇa with undivided mind, he regards that his own Lord Muralīdhara Śyāmasundara is sometimes adored as Śrī Rāma, as Śiva, as Gaṇeśa, as goddess Kālī and sometimes He is adored as untaintedly formless *Brahma*. He reflects thus—Śyāmasundara, the very object of his adoration constantly and invariably pervades the whole universe unmanifestedly; his own Nanda Nandana is the embodiment of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss; the Lord who transcends the three times. It is because of that

Puruṣottama stationed in all the embodied creatures in the form of soul, their being a soul, is justified. The selfsame Lord incarnates Himself at times in different forms and provides pleasure to the saints and the devotees and establishes the rule of *Dharma* and He alone accepts the worship of different cults and sects, assuming different forms, qualities and sentiments; it is He who eternally permeates every atom. Likewise those worshipping Śrī Rāma with undivided mind, those worshipping Śrī Śiva and those worshipping Śrī Gaṇeśa—all should be regarded as the aspects, extension and grandeur of the same divinity which is adored by him. He who regards the divinity adored by others as differed from the one adored by him, belittles his own Lord in an indirect way and slightens him. He degrades the almighty from limitless to the limited; the endless to the small; from omnipresent to the confined one and from the universally adored to a sectarian god. The divinity adored by not only Hindus but by the entire world, is infact, one and the same reality. The variations appear due to variations in respect of place, time, individuals, liking and circumstances etc., which disappear after the realization of God through His grace. Unmindful of these objective differences and even while adoring single-mindedly, the divinity of one's choice, one should try to visualize God in every creature, everywhere and at all times. The entire universe—mobile and immobile—is the body of the Lord the very manifestation of His. Conceiving that way one should try to please God by serving all living beings with sense of duty. It is sacrilege to speak ill of the divinity adored by others on sectarian basis.

Therefore, dismissing from one's mind the feelings of malice leading to dissension, one should adore the Lord devotedly in accordance with one's own conception and feeling. After continuous practice of adoration when one comes to the realization of God's grace, the realization of the true aspect of God will spontaneously be achieved. That aspect of the Lord is highly unimaginable. It is beyond the reach of human intellect. According to *Śākhācandra Nyāya* all the aspects of the manifest

and unmanifest divinity which are either described through tongue or are cogitated upon by mind— all point to Him, in fact, they are not real ones. The aspect of God is entirely beyond all descriptions. Through the sincere and unmotived adoration of these aspects sooner or later, the life of a true devotee is sure to become meaningful and its object won. Then complexities leading to contradictions, will easily be solved one after the other. But a person trying to achieve such a goal ought to be careful from the beginning lest we should reduce the all-pervading Lord to a diminutive form and indulge in a *Tāmasika* adoration of the Lord; lest by reducing the unlimited to limited one we should belittle His importance. The Lord is the greatest of the great and smaller than even the smallest. He pervades all the three times and yet He is beyond all times; pervades all the three worlds and yet He is beyond the three worlds. Everything is encompassed in Him yet He permeates everything. In fact He is the *summum bonum* and His glory is known to Him alone, He only has the true knowledge of His ownself and all His various aspects belong to Him.

Our duty consists in constantly lying at His feet with humility and in casting yearning look for His compassionate glance. We shall be able to know Him truly when He will be compassionate enough to reveal Himself to us. But for this there is no easy means of knowing Him. Of course we shall have to make some preparation for this. We shall have to cleanse our mind of all impurities, shall have to see Him manifested throughout the world and shall have to find His reflection in each and every faith and community. There can hardly be any creature upon this earth who can seek redemption anyway without accepting His supremacy. The rivers flowing down from different directions, rush toward the same ocean so has everybody to hasten towards God, the embodiment of Bliss. Even the atheists have to acknowledge His existence in one way or the other. So one should try to visualize His divine aspect permeating everything and every creature.

People look on with suspicion at the elephant-like head of

Gaṇeśajī and the fact that a rat is His steed. The reason is that they think that He must have body like that of men living here, He must have a head like that of an elephant found here and He must have a tiny rat for His steed. They raise doubt considering their thought of imagination to be true. But if one is desirous of ascertaining all these things he must adore Śrī Gaṇeśajī with devotion. Only he will be able to explain the secret of His body, His elephant like head and His steed. In that case all the suspicions will be removed. One should be able to conceive what sort of body Gaṇeśajī, the son of Maheśvara Himself, could have. Lord Śaṅkara is said to be Kṛttivāsaḥ. He uses the skin of elephant as His loin-cloth. Thus it is axiomatically proved that He must have a body larger than that of an elephant. So would be the body of Śrī Gaṇeśa. The head planted on His body must be the head of a young one of an elephant. If Gaṇeśajī has chosen a rat for His steed after due deliberation, it must be a rat that could carry His heavy weight.

Garuḍa is said to be the steed of Lord Viṣṇu. Garuḍa is the name of a bird. How could a bird be the steed of Lord Viṣṇu, the cause of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world. But the fact is that Garuḍa is no ordinary bird. It has the capacity of flying thousands of miles holding in its clutches even the hugest elephants like that of Airāvata. Hanumānjī is said to be a *Vānara* the single blow of whose fisted hand caused Rāvaṇa, the conqueror of the three worlds, to faint. Shall we compare him with the ordinary monkeys of today.

As huge is the divine form of Śrī Gaṇeśa so are His body, head and His steed etc.

Spiritually He is the soul of the universe, permeates the inner self and is all pervading. Being the master of senses He is Gaṇeśa. The word *Mūṣaka* means—one who steals. 'मूषक' is the symbol of the evil propensities of mind such as thieving etc. Gaṇeśajī rides on them i.e., He treads them, kicks them with His feet. By the remembrance of and cogitating on Gaṇeśajī the propensities of the mind are subdued. The word Gaṇeśa also denotes one who is the

master of all the *Gaṇas*. The chairman of any republic or Rajahs are supposed to be the embodiment of Gaṇeśa. In that context too having rat as one's steed means the subordination of the wicked as well as the evil propensities. To have a mouth like that of an elephant too is not devoid of a secret meaning. 'गज' denotes the number eight. One who attends to all the eight directions is aptly called 'गजमुख'. Every master or monarch is required to have this quality. Being the omnipresent and omniscient, He is attentive in all the eight sub-divisions of a day and towards all the eight directions. That is why He is called *Gajamukha* and likewise *Mūṣaka Vāhana*. Only a *Gajamukha* and *Mūṣaka Vāhana* can be the master of *Siddhis* and intellect. The saying goes that *Ṛddhi* (prosperity) and *Siddhi* (accomplishments) both vigilantly attend on Gaṇeśajī and continuously flap on Him with chowries.

Miraculous performances and miracle doers are saluted by us, but we fail to realise that it is *Namaskāra* that generates the miracles. Our devoted *Namaskāra* has enormous powers to please gods and get accomplishments otherwise unimaginable. It is axiomatic that we should perform good deeds in order to achieve good results. It is not at all proper to expect good results without doing good deeds. Particularly prescribed actions have to be done to achieve the pleasure of the gods. We should never forget that the world is very necessary while we are living in the world. A country cannot be great by having sky-scrappers and factories and armies. Its greatness depends on the wealth of morality and performing good deeds. Lord Gaṇeśa is the panacea of all our existing troubles, if we duly understand and appreciate his characteristics.

—*Compiled*

Concept of Vināyaka

All Ancient Manuscripts, whether written on palm leaves or any other material, commenced with salutations to Śrī Vināyaka "श्रीगणाधिपतये नम:". From the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, Hindus worship Śrī Vināyaka at the commencement of every auspicious ceremony. In Tamilnadu in particular, almost every street has a temple for Vināyaka, and while travelling from one place to another, you cannot miss seeing the image of Vināyaka, installed either in a temple, or a niche, or under a peepul tree. Saint Tyāgarāja's first composition "गिरिराजसुता तनय", is in praise of Gaṇeśa. All these show the great significance attached to this elephant-faced deity in our religious thought.

In Tamilnadu, this deity has come to be known as Pillaiyār, because, He is the *Pillai* or son of the parents of the Universe, Pārvatī-Parameśvara. When you begin to contemplate upon this particular manifestation of the Divine, an unending stream of *Tattvas* or religious principles come to mind. Though His body is of gigantic proportions, He is yet a child. Every mother likes to feed her child well so that he may grow up plumpy and healthy. That is why Pillaiyār is contemplated as a voracious eater, fond of all nice things. He is essentially an object of affection for children, who take delight in playing at *Yānai* (elephant), imitating the gait of the elephant. It is noteworthy that one is never tired of looking at an elephant, or watching the rolling waves of the ocean or gazing at the soothing moon. It is paradoxical that with such a massive body, Gaṇapati should have chosen the tiny mouse as His *Vāhana* or vehicle. It is said that He sat on the mouse as light as a cork. This

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conception of Vināyaka riding a mouse is illustrative of the *Vedantic* truth that God alone matters and that all other external paraphernalia are illusions. The pride of an elephant is in its tusks, and it takes care to keep them bright and sharp. But Vināyaka broke one of His tusks to write the *Mahābhārata,* demonstrating that no personal sacrifice is too much in the cause of spreading knowledge of truth, *Dharma* and *Jñāna*. The Tamil saint Avvayār wrote *Vināyagar Ahaval* explaining how Vināyaka is the embodiment of the *Yoga Śāstra*, with all its aims and implications.

अगजाननपद्मार्कं गजाननमहर्निशम्। अनेकदन्तं भक्तानामेकदन्तमुपास्महे॥

This is a familiar prayer addressed to Vināyaka. *Agajā* is the Divine Mother Pārvatī. As we know Pārvatī is regarded as the daughter of the mountain Himavān. While even trees, plants and creepers are considered to have motion, because they grow upwards, a mountain is static or *Aga* (motionless). Being born to the mountain, Pārvatī is *Agajā*. At the sight of Her beloved child, Vināyaka, Pārvatī's face (*Ānanam*) beams with joy, even as the lotus blossoms at the first rays of the sun. For the lotus face (*Padmānana*) of Śrī Pārvatī, Vināyaka is the sun (*Arka*). For His devotees, Vināyaka showers benefits generously "*bhaktānāṁ anekadam*". He has only one tusk (*Ekadantam*). The devotee says that he is worshipping that elephant-faced Vināyaka—"*taṁ gajānanaṁ upāsmahe*" who is the beloved son of Agajā.

The conception of Vināyaka is a magnificent one. Devoted worship of Him will remove all obstacles from our path and lead us to happiness. It is a special feature of Tamilnadu to refer to Him with the endearing name of Pillaiyār or eldest son, Subrahmaṇya being referred to as Kumāran or boy. When we surrender ourselves to Pillaiyār, He assumes the responsibility of leading us to happiness. We offer our obeisance to Vināyaka by making *Toppīkarṇam*. In this method of salutation, we catch our left ear with the right hand and the right ear with our left hand and bend down till the joints of the fore-arm with the upper arm touch the ground. This we repeat a number of times. *Toppikkarṇam* is a

corruption of "*dorbhiḥ karṇam gṛhītvā*". Viṣṇu is stated to have offered this form of salutation to make Vināyaka laugh and throw out the discus (*Cakram*), which He was keeping concealed in His mouth. The manifestation of Vināyaka embodies the high philosophic principle (*Tattva*) of the functioning of the universe as a mere sport of God. The devoted worship of any deity that has come to be worshipped in each family for generations, and meditation over the truths that deity symbolises, will lead to our happiness and the happiness of the world.

यः स्वल्पमप्यञ्चति सद्गुणोदयं मूर्ध्नोचितं तस्य समर्हणं सताम्।
इत्यालपन् बालकलाधरं दधत् स्याद् भूतये भालकलाधरो मम॥

The good-natured people should pay due respect to the person or persons inculcating good qualities just like Lord Gaṇeśa in His Bhālacandra aspect, holds a crescent moon on His forehead. That Bhālacandra Gaṇeśa may be a source of prosperity to us.

नेत्रद्वन्द्वं साधुने जीवनाय नाऽलं तस्माज्ज्ञाननेत्रं ध्रियेत।
इत्यक्ष्णा संसूचयन् भालगेन नागास्यो नः पातु धीवारिराशिः॥

For living a virtuous life it is not sufficient to have only two eyes capable of perceiving the grossest thing. A person must have the third eye that is the eye of the knowledge. In order to establish the above fact Lord Gaṇeśa has got three eyes. This way the elephant-faced God, Gaṇeśa— the ocean of wisdom, may protect us.

N. B.— English translation of a discourse in Tamil by Śrī Jagadguru Śrī Candraśekharendrasarasvatī Śrī Śaṅkarācārya Swāmī of Śrī Kāñcī Kāmakoṭi Pīṭham at Madras on 2nd November, 1957.

Gaṇeśa—As in Rāmacaritamānasa

—*Dr. Budhsen Chaturvedi*

Gaṇeśa is the Vedic God of wisdom. He has different names in our religious scriptures. In the *Mahābhārata* He is known by the names of Heramba, Gaṇanāyaka, Vighneśa and Gaṇeśa. In the *Skandapurāṇa, Maheśvara Khaṇḍa, Uttarārdha* (17. 23), He is addressed by the names of Gajānana, Heramba, Vakratuṇḍa, Kapila, Cintāmaṇi and Vināyaka. Gaṇeśa has eight incarnations viz., (1) Vakratuṇḍa (2) Ekadanta (3) Mahodara (4) Gajānana (5) Lambodara (6) Vikaṭa (7) Vighnarāja and (8) Dhūmravarṇa.

Gaṇeśa is the *Siddhidātā*—the giver of success. He is also the giver of happiness and prosperity. He is our protector and benefactor. In the *Devāsura Saṅgrāma,* Gaṇeśa had helped the gods by destroying the demons. Being pleased with this act, Indra said—"You are adorable to all gods and as such those who will worship you before starting any act, will undoubtedly attain success." He is, therefore, remembered before starting any auspicious work. We pray to Him to remove all our hurdles. All the three *Guṇas—Sattva, Raja* and *Tama,* reside in Him. He gives blessings even to the gods. The idol of Gaṇeśa resides in 'ॐ'*(Om)* and there is much similarity between 'ॐ' and the form of Gaṇeśa. On the *Dīpāvalī* day Gaṇeśa is worshipped along with Lakṣmī. On the *Gaṇeśa Caturthī* day, He is worshipped in homes, temples and public places. Gaṇeśa is usually installed before starting the construction of a house, a temple or a shop. Gaṇeśa and Sarasvatī are worshipped and the teacher writes *Śrī Gaṇeśāya Namaḥ* (श्री गणेशाय नमः) on the slate of the child who comes to learn the first alphabets. It is also considered

auspicious to write this prayer (श्री गणेशाय नमः) on the top of invitation cards, ledgers etc.

विद्यारम्भे विवाहे च प्रवेशे निर्गमे तथा।
संग्रामे संकटे चैव विघ्नस्तस्य न जायते।।

The worship, adoration and remembrance of Gaṇeśa in different situations is beneficial to mankind. He is a repository of wisdom *(Vidyā Vāridhi* and *Buddhi Vidhātā)*. Human life is useless without wisdom which cannot be achieved without the grace of Gaṇeśa. In the beginning of *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa, Vinaya-Patrikā, Śrī Rāmalalā Nahachū, Pārvatī Maṅgala, Jānakī Maṅgala* and *Baravai Rāmāyaṇa, Goswāmī* Tulasīdāsa has offered his prayers to God Gaṇeśa for the successful completion of his works.

In the *Rāmacaritamānasa* the poet prays to Lord Gaṇeśa the leader of Śiva's retinue whose very thought ensures success, who carries on His shoulders the head of a beautiful elephant, who is a repository of wisdom and an abode of blessed qualities, to shower His grace.

जो सुमिरत सिधि होइ गन नायक करिबर बदन।
करउ अनुग्रह सोइ बुद्धि रासि सुभ गुन सदन।।

(I. 1. 0)

The people of Ayodhya have great faith in the five gods—Gaṇeśa, Gaurī, Śiva, Sun and Viṣṇu, and they worship Gaṇeśa first of all. This rule is also followed in Chitrakuta.

करि मज्जनु पूजहिं नर नारी। गनप गौरि त्रिपुरारि तमारी।
रमा रमन पद बंदि बहोरी। बिनवहिं अंजुलि अंचल जोरी।।

(*Mānasa* II. 272. 2-3)

In the opening lines of *Vinaya-Patrikā* Tulasīdāsa implores Lord Gaṇeśa to instil the devotion of Sītā-Rāma in his heart.

गाइये गनपति जगबंदन। संकर-सुवन भवानी-नंदन।।१।।
सिद्धि-सदन, गज-बदन, बिनायक। कृपा-सिंधु, सुंदर, सब-लायक।।२।।
मोदक-प्रिय, मुद-मंगल-दाता। बिद्या-बारिधि, बुद्धि-बिधाता।।३।।
माँगत तुलसिदास कर जोरे। बसहिं रामसिय मानस मोरे।।४।।

(1)

Sītā is very much disturbed when she sees in the *Svayamvara*

the strong, invincible bow on one hand, and the frail, tender body of Śrī Rāma on the other, she implores the Lord Gaṇeśa to lighten the weight of the bow. She says—"O God Gaṇeśa, the chief of Śiva's attendants, O bestower of boons, it is for this day that I have adored thee. Listening to my repeated supplication, therefore, reduce the weight of the bow to a mere trifle."

गननायक बर दायक देवा। आजु लगें कीन्हिउँ तुअ सेवा।
बार बार बिनती सुनि मोरी। करहु चाप गुरुता अति थोरी।।

(*Mānasa* I . 256.4)

Before ascending the chariot for departure from Ayodhya to participate in the marriage of Śrī Rāma, Daśaratha fixes his thoughts on Lord Hara, his preceptor (Vasiṣṭha), goddess Gaurī and the God Gaṇeśa for the successful completion of the marriage ceremony.

तेहिं रथ रुचिर बसिष्ठ कहुँ हरसि चढ़ाइ नरेसु।
आपु चढ़ेउ स्यंदन सुमिरि हर गुर गौरि गनेसु।।

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It is customary to worship Gaṇeśa at the time of marriage. At the time of their nuptial even Śambhu and Bhawānī—the divine pair—pay divine honours to Lord Gaṇapati.

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It may be asked how Gaṇeśa who is the offspring of Śiva and Pārvatī came to be worshipped by the divine pair even at the time of their wedding. The poet explains this question by stating that Gaṇapati and the other gods are eternal and unbegotten and that they only appear to be born.

When Sītā was brought to the marriage pavilion, the *Gurus* (Vasiṣṭha and Śatānanda) directed the Brahmins that she must first worship goddess Gaurī and her son Gaṇeśa.

आचारु करि गुर गौरि गनपति मुदित बिप्र पुजावहीं।

(*Mānasa* I. 322.*Chanda* 1

Sītā was asked to sit on her beautiful throne only after worshipping the gods.

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Gaṇeśa has infinite wisdom. Human life is useless without wisdom which cannot be achieved without the grace of Gaṇeśa. According to Hindu mythology God Śiva cut the heads of both Dakṣa and Gaṇeśa who are supposed to have great intelligence. After cutting their heads He gave the head of *Aja* (goat) to Dakṣa and that of *Gaja* (elephant) to Gaṇeśa. After getting the head of the elephant, Gaṇeśa became *Vidyā Vāridhi* and *Buddhi Vidhātā*. The elephant head is the symbol of faith (*Viśvāsa*) which is the source of devotion *(Bhakti)*. Without faith one cannot get the devotion of Rāma.

बिनु बिस्वास भगति नहिं तेहि बिनु द्रवहिं न रामु।

(*Mānasa* VII. 90)

Gaṇeśa is the embodiment of both faith and reverence because He is the son of Śaṅkara and Pārvatī.

भवानीशङ्करौ वन्दे श्रद्धाविश्वासरूपिणौ।

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Thus Gaṇeśa has wisdom, faith, reverence, strength and what not? He is the Supreme benefactor not only of the mankind but also of the gods. Mere remembrance of His name removes all hurdles and ensures success. He showers happiness, peace and prosperity on His devotees. Without His grace even the gods are not pleased. Therefore, we should wholeheartedly surrender ourselves at His feet.

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ध्वान्तापहास्तु शरणं मम कोऽपि भास्वान्॥

A leader, while dealing with public must not be in ruffled mood. On the contrary he should always be happy and cheerful with a transparent and large heart. Indicating this norm through his beaming countenance Lord Gaṇeśa like a sun to remove the darkness of obstacles, be refuge to us.

the strong, invincible bow on one hand, and the frail, tender body of Śrī Rāma on the other, she implores the Lord Gaṇeśa to lighten the weight of the bow. She says—"O God Gaṇeśa, the chief of Śiva's attendants, O bestower of boons, it is for this day that I have adored thee. Listening to my repeated supplication, therefore, reduce the weight of the bow to a mere trifle."

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Gaṇeśa as Depicted in Tantra Śāstra

—*Prof. Sanjaya Kumar Mahapatra*

The *Tantras* have remained a neglected branch of study, in spite of the fact that they include a very considerable number of texts, most of them still in manuscript, varying in date from the fifth century to the nineteenth. Some relegate them to the class of black magic, whereas others consider them full of obscenities and unfit for the study of a man of good taste. These opinions, however, do not represent the whole truth. It cannot be denied that in some texts there is what may be called black magic and there are also a few texts full of obscenities; but these do not form the main bulk of the *Tantric* literature. They also do not represent the *Tantric Sādhanā* at its best. The *Tantric* literature essentially represents a very important part of Indian spiritual lore, so far as its practical aspect is concerned. A failure to appreciate its real significance, renders our—understanding of the ancient spiritual knowledge, shallow and superficial. However, the object of writing this article is to draw attention of the scholars to the cult of Gaṇeśa as depicted in *Tantra Śāstra.*

Gāṇapatya Tantras—

These *Tantras* contain the details of *Gaṇapati Pūjā*. There are different methods and aspects of *Pūjā*. These methods are also available in *Miśra Grantha* of *Tantra*. In different parts of India *Gaṇapati Pūjā* is celebrated in different forms. *Gaṇapati Atharva Śīrṣa* is another name given under the influence of the *Ācāryas* of Southern India. More details can be taken from *Prapañcasāra, Śāradā Tilaka, Mantra Mahodadhi* etc., which are famous *Tantric Granthas.*

Tantric Image—

There are certain *Tantric* images of Gaṇeśa found in different parts of India which correspond to the iconographic features expounded in *Tantric* texts. One such image is installed in the temple shrine of Lord Jagannātha towards the north of the temple of Vimalā, the presiding deity. This image is known under the popular name Kāñcī Gaṇeśa. The uniqueness of the image lies in the fact that the snout has entered into the vagina of a female deity placed on the left thigh of Gaṇeśa. The image is about six feet in height.

Vāmācāra—

In every *Tantric Vāmācāra* worship, Gaṇeśa occupies a vital role and the deity accepts the *Bali* (sacrifice) along with *Kṣetrapāla, Vaṭuka* and *Yoginī*. After the *Kṣetrapāla-Bali,* offering is made to Gaṇapati on the North, with the *Mantra* formed by adding to the letter *Ga* the six long vowels in succession with the *Bindu* thereon, followed by the name Gaṇeśa in the dative singular, and ending with *Svāhā. Gāṁ, Gīṁ, Gūṁ, Gaiṁ, Gauṁ, Gaḥ, Gaṇapataye Svāhā.*

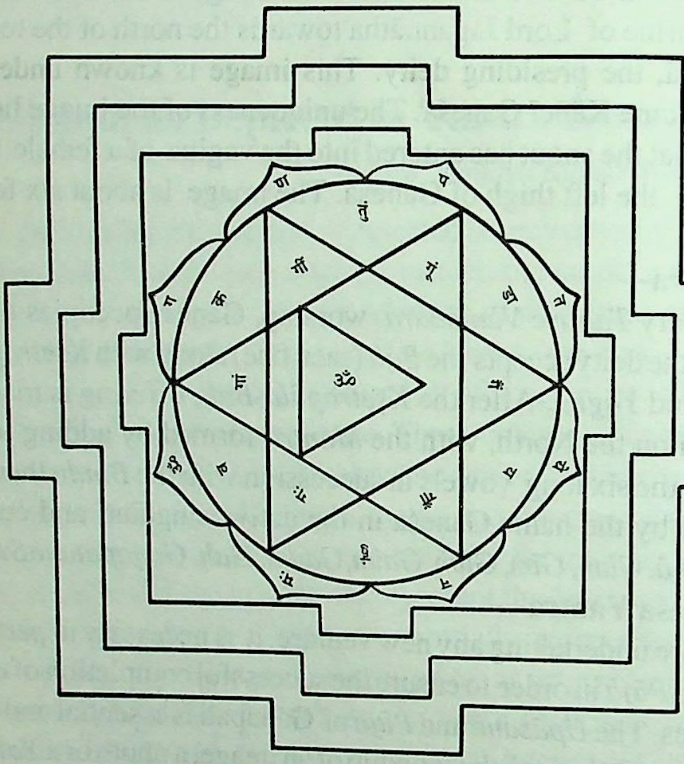
Śrī Gaṇeśa Yantra—

Before undertaking any new venture, it is necessary to perform a *Gaṇeśa Pūjā* in order to ensure the successful completion of one's objectives. The *Upāsanā* and *Pūjā* of Gaṇapati is essential and may be performed through the worship of an image, a photo or a *Yantra.* The *Swastika* is the sign of Lord Gaṇeśa. The *Yantra* should be made on *Bhojapatra,* gold, silver or copper. The *Śrī Gaṇeśa Yantra* should be written according to prescribed canons at an auspicious time. With the chanting of *Mantras,* the *Yantra* is purified. The *Yantra* is composed of six triangles which are closed on all sides, with a central triangle and *Bindu* inside. The *Bīja* word can also be recited for purifying the *Yantra.*

After attaining *Siddhi* of the *Yantra,* the *Sādhaka* will be blessed with the fulfilment of his desires, and the achievement of his goals of securing wealth, power and authority. The *Yantra* must be worshipped for a period of thirty days and the chanting of one

thousand *Mantras* a day. Flowers, honey, milk and coconuts should be placed as offerings.

Śrī Gaṇeśa Yantra



Japa Mantras—

Three *Japa Mantras* are given below for purifying the *Yantra* as well as for the attainment of *Siddhi*.

(1) ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं ग्लौं गं गणपतये वर वरद सर्वजनं मे वशमानय स्वाहा।

(2) ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं ग्लौं गं गणपतये वर वरद सर्वजनं मे वशमानय ठः ठः।

(3) ॐ गं गणपतये नमः।

Mūlādhāra Cakra—

The lowest at the level of the anus, is called *Mūlādhāra*, represented as a lotus with four petals, wherein *Kuṇḍalinī* dwells contracted or asleep in the state dormant. It is formed of *Pṛthivī-Tattva* (earth element). Earth is also the last evolute of *Prakṛti*.

Nature, after producing which the creative power remains contracted or coiled up as the *Kuṇḍalinī.* Gaṇeśa is closely associated with the *Pṛthivī-Tattva.* As such, before awakening the serpent power *(Kuṇḍalinī)* each and every *Sādhaka* offers prayers to Gaṇapati.

Śvetārka Gaṇapati—

In *Saṁskṛta* it is called *Arka* and in Hindi is known as *Āka.* This *Arka* plant has green and blue leaves. Its flowers are of small size but without any fragrance. The *Arka* family has a rare white plant which also has white flowers. The root of this white *Arka* must be taken out carefully. When the bark and thin wood over the root is peeled off, one will see an image of *Gaṇapati* below it. This is called *Śvetārka Gaṇapati. Yogīs* use it mostly for *Sādhanā.* The *Śāstras* say that in any house which has a white Gaṇapati, remains free from all evils and the possessor is blessed with immense wealth.

Thus, from the above discussion, it is obvious that Gaṇeśa plays a significant role in the *Tantric* religious life of the Indians. That is why almost all the *Tantric* texts have highly extolled Śrī Gaṇeśajī in the following manner—

"kalau kālī siddhivināyakau."

पुत्रादपि परः स्वामी धर्मश्च स्वामिनः परः।
नष्टे धर्मे च धर्मिष्ठे स्वामिना किं सुतेनवा॥
स्वामिनश्च परोधर्मो धर्मात् सत्यञ्च सुव्रते।
सत्यं सङ्कल्पितं कर्म न तु भ्रष्टं कुरु व्रतम्॥

"The husband for a wife, is better and more valuable than the son but the *Dharma* is certainly superior in value even to the husband. If the *Dharma* is lost there remains no use of the son or the husband. *Dharma* is superior to the husband but the truth surpasses even the *Dharma* in superiority. Whatever action you have taken a vow to perform, is the *Satya.*"

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (VII. 41-42)

Gaṇeśa: The Son of Aditi

There was a brahmin named Rudraketu in the Aṅga country. His wife was Śāradā who once gave birth to a twin. The couple worshipped Gaṇeśa and following the instructions of learned brahmins they christened, the two boys Devāntaka and Narāntaka respectively. The boys grew up. Once Nārada came to the house of Rudraketu and initiated those boys with the five lettered *Mantra* (ॐ नमः शिवाय). They went to the forest after taking permission from the parents and practised unimaginable penances. The five-faced God was pleased and appeared before them. Both of them requested the God for their immortality and sovereignty over the three worlds. Lord Śaṅkara granted the boon and disappeared.

Sometimes after they decided to conquer the entire universe. With this errand Devāntaka set out for heaven to oust Indra from his position. He did justify his name Devāntaka. All gods were defeated and they took shelter in forests and caves.

Narāntaka started to have a victory over the earth and defeating each and every king, killing most of them, he had a mind to go to Pātāla and establish his empire there also. Within a short time both the brothers left no rival and became cruel tyrrants. All the three worlds were crushed and trampled by these two demons and their army. Finally the gods and the earth in the form of a cow, went to Brahmā, the creator and narrated their miserable plight to him. The tormented gods requested Brahmā to think of some means to provide them relief from those demons. Brahmā praised and eulogized the Supreme God and prayed to do something urgently and in reply Brahmā was told to have patience and that the Supreme

God would take incarnation from the womb of Aditi, the wife of Kaśyapa. With this assurance the gods and the earth were happy and went to their respective places.

In the meantime one day Aditi requested the *Ṛṣi* Kaśyapa to preach her some means and methods, some *Tapasyā* or vow so that by performing them she may have Supreme God as her son. Kaśyapa prescribed her to make *Japa* of five-lettered formula for propitiating Lord Śaṅkara and asked her to perform *Puraścaraṇa* to have her wishes fulfilled. Aditi did it and in due course one day Vināyaka in all His splendour appeared before her. She could not bear the vision and fell unconscious. Vināyaka consoled her and asked her to express the desire of her heart. She told—"O God of gods, I wish to have You as my son." Lord Vināyaka said— "Be it so" and disappeared.

In due course as the son of Kaśyapa the Lord incarnated Himself to destroy the evil and the demons. On the eleventh day they performed His *Nāmakaraṇa* and named Him as Mahotkaṭa. After receiving this happy news the *Ṛṣis* like Vasiṣṭha and Vāmadeva came to the hermitage of Kaśyapa, blessed the child and advised the parents to take every step for protecting the child.

One day Kaśyapa went for his daily bath and Aditi also went out for some urgent peace of work leaving the boy sleeping in His craddle. Finding the hermitage lonely, Virajā, a demoness came and swallowed the boy and drank sufficient water. Lo! her stomach has started now swelling like a balloon and she is feeling unbearable pain. Now her stomach has got burst open and Mahotkaṭa came out quite safe. This Mahotkaṭa is none else but Śrī Gaṇeśa who appeared for the annihilation of the entire demon race and for establishing righteousness in the world.

—*Gaṇeśa Purāṇa*

Esoteric Appellations of Gaṇapati

—Jankinath Kaul 'Kamal'

Before explaining the esoteric appellations of Gaṇapati, it is important to note that this Indian god of wisdom, wealth and beauty, is essentially the Vedic deity. Besides this the *Tantra Śāstras* consider the deity to be the foremost power of manifestation. Ordinarily, Gaṇapati or Gaṇeśa has the same characteristics as Janus of the Latins. All sacrifices and religious ceremonies, all serious writings and all worldly affairs of importance, even the spiritual practices are begun by pious Hindus with an invocation to Gaṇeśa.

Gaṇa literally means 'a company of deities' (गण् समूहे) and *Īśa* means a leader or Governor (ईश: कर्ता). Therefore Gaṇeśa is the initial power that makes the secondary deities work the process of universal manifestation. There are different versions in different *Purāṇas* regarding the birth of Gaṇapati. But, in true experience, He is the basic reality of the whole manifestation evident through creation, preservation and dissolution. Gaṇapati is the first vibration of evolution, the very life-breath rather the vital air or *Prāṇa* that sustains all creatures of the universe—demoniac, human and divine. The *Upaniṣads* declare verily He is the vital air 'प्राणो वै सः'. According to the school of *Śaiva* mysticism, Gaṇapati represents the first throb of manifestation(प्रथम स्पन्द). In the *Śākta* lore Gaṇeśa stands for the first vibration or origin of sound. The first sound (प्रथम वाक्) or universal vibration (परा वाक्) is the nature of the deity. This is in reconciliation with the *Vedas* as the deity named *Brahmaṇaspati* in the *Vedas* came later to be known as Gaṇeśa. The *Vedas* have sung in His praise—

गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे कविं कवीनामुपम श्रवस्तमम्।
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत आ नः शृण्वन्नूतिभिः सीद सादनम्।।
(*Ṛgveda* II. 23.1)

The meaning of *Brahma* is *Vāk* (speech). Gaṇapati is understood to be the lord of speech *Vākpati* or Jyeṣṭharāja—as He is the eldest of all or the king of the first evolved deities. He persuades even Indra and Bṛhaspati to act in their respective fields. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* endorsed this—

एष उ ब्रह्मणस्पतिर्वाग् वै ब्रह्म।
तस्या एष पतिस्तस्मादु बृहस्पतिः।।

He is the one who created this body and then entered there Himself and appeared as sound, *Vāk* that manifests through the alphabet 'तत्सृष्ट्वा तस्मिन्नेव प्राविशत्' says again the *Upaniṣad*. Therefore, He is verily the *Brahma*, the all-pervading self, the initial cause of all what this universe consists of and beyond.

In the *Gaṇeśa Gāyatrī* itself Gaṇeśa is praised as *Ekadanta* and *Vakratuṇḍa*—

एकदन्ताय विद्महे वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि।
तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्।।

Gaṇeśa is called the one-tusked god as His right tusk of the elephant-face only appears. We find in the *Purāṇas* the stories about His breaking the left tusk. He is also called *Bhagnavāmarada*—the deity whose left tusk is broken. By knowing the true meaning of the word *Ekadanta* we can try to know the reality about Gaṇeśa. *Eka* stands for *Māyā* or delusion. *Danta* means holder of essence i. e., *Brahma*, the propellor of *Māyā*. Therefore Gaṇeśa as *Ekadanta* is the power that persuades delusion to persist as is well endorsed by the *Mudgala Purāṇa* in the following lines—

एकशब्दात्मिका माया तस्याः सर्वं समुद्भवम्।
भ्रान्तिदं मोहदं पूर्णं नानाखेलात्मकं किल।।
दन्तः सत्ताधरस्तत्र मायाचालक उच्यते।
बिम्बेन मोहयुक्तश्च स्वयं स्वानन्दगो भवेत्।।
माया भ्रान्तिमयी प्रोक्ता सत्ताचालक उच्यते।
तयोर्योगे गणेशोऽयमेकदन्तः प्रकीर्तितः।।

Ekadanta is the union of *Māyā* and *Brahma* of *Vedānta*, being face-to face of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* of *Sāṅkhya* and oneness of Śiva and *Śakti* of *Śaiva* mysticism. It is the play of unity in diversity and the chief player as well as enjoyer of the play is Gaṇapati.

Another appellation of Gaṇapati is *Vakratuṇḍa*. The meaning appears closer to what has been described above. But this name has its own esoteric speciality. Although it is within the field of everybody's experience that this world consists of mind and speech 'मनोवाणीमयं जगत्'— yet it is the *Ātmā* that is ever moving. Therefore the *Ātmā* is different, separate or broken from *Tuṇḍa* the headless body. *Vakra* means that entity which is broken away from mind and speech. That is everlasting and permanent while mind and body are transitory and temporary. *Ātmā* is consciousness itself, ever new and ever alert like the elephant-face of Gaṇapati and mind and speech are like body, bound and deluded by *Māyā*. Therefore Gaṇapati as *Vakratuṇḍa* is *Brahma*, all full and infinite, beyond mind and speech. Realising Gaṇapati as absolute peace, plenty and beauty all duality is set asunder. *Vakratuṇḍa* means that Gaṇeśa is beyond duality, untouched by *Māyā*.

A prominent appellation of Gaṇapati is *Gajānana* or *Gajamukha*. His face is like that of an elephant while the body below its neck is that of a human being. Here the esoteric meaning of *Gaja* is wonderful. Whom *Yogīs* attain through contemplation is *Ga* 'समाधिना योगिनो यत्र गच्छन्ति इति ग:' and from whom this universe springs in the formless syllable *Aum* (ॐ) as a reflection of His own self is *Jaḥ* "यस्मात् बिम्बप्रतिबिम्बतया प्रणवात्मकं जगत् जायते इति ज:". Therefore *Gajānana,* the face of *Gaja* stands for *Brahma*, the all-pervading basic unity, the practical cause of manifestation in the universe. He is the Supreme Truth that controls the universe or this body below the neck.

In the *Mahāvākya 'tat twam asi' Brahma*, free from *Māyā* and its effects or the head of Gaṇapati is represented by *Tat* (That) and the created human body quite influenced by *Māyā* is represented by *Twam* (Thou). The word *Asi* (Art) in the sentence reconciles the two

by completing the meaning of the great sentence. *'tat twam asi'* is the first great sentence of the *Upaniṣads* through which the preceptor initiates the disciple and admits him to the spiritual field of practice and penance for the realization of the Supreme Truth.

For ritualistic worship there are many prominent places of Gaṇapati-worship besides a large number of temples all over the country. There are two famous temples of the deity in Kashmir. One named Gaṇapatyar is situated on the right bank of the Vitastā between Budshah bridge and Habbakadal. The other Gaṇeśa is at the foot of *Hari Parbata* hillock wherefrom circumambulation of Śārikā Śaila begins. A third place of Gaṇeśa- worship is at *Gaṇeśabal* near Pahalgam and is periodically visited by pilgrims to Amarnath cave.

It is regular ritualistic worship performed by an initiated devotee that ushers him to the empirical field of spiritual practice. While worshipping Gaṇapati one has first to understand literal meaning of the name-word and then try to know about glorious deeds of the deity. By doing so faith is developed in a searching mind. Then, following instructions of the preceptor with faith and devotion, an earnest aspirant's attention turns inwards. He begins to reflect in his mind. He meditates. Mind becomes pure (i.e., free from all trash thinking), esoteric meaning about the deity is revealed for realization of the truth. It is revealed through the great sentence "*tat twam asi*" (Thou art that) on the very sight of a picture or a statue of Gajānana Gaṇapati. A *Jñānī*, established in the practice of concentration, happens to follow the true meaning of the *Mahāvākya* as a result of good actions performed in previous births. Such chances are easily available to common people by worshipping the blissful *Mūrti* of Gajānana. This is expressed in the very first *Śruti Vākya* of the *Śrī Gaṇeśa Atharvaśīrṣa*—

त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं तत्त्वमसि।

"Thou art verily the realization of Thou art that". This is endorsed by the name "*tat tvam padanirūpitaḥ*" in the *Gaṇapati-Sahasranāma* of *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa*—

तत्त्वानां परमं तत्त्वं तत्त्वं पदनिरूपितः।

"The great reality of all realities is that Thou art well described in the sentence "Thou art that—*tat twam asi*". Thus the reality about Gaṇapati is declared on the authority of the *Vedas* (*Śrutis*) that discuss the ultimate unity of *Jīva* and *Brahma*.

Another peculiar name of Gaṇapati is Śūrpakarṇa (one whose ears are like threshers). A thresher in Kashmiri is called *Śup*, in Hindustani it is *Sūpa*. Just as a thresher plate separates grain from husk, so does Gaṇapati separate the *Māyic Jīva* from impurities (*Mala*) and reveals self-luminous *Brahma*. It will not be needless to say that a creature (*Jīva*) involved in nescience by the power of *Māyā* or delusion becomes inert. This inertia keeps him bound to limitations. When all the sloth of *Jīva-bhāva* is cleared away, one becomes aware of universal consciousness which is the same in all beings 'संविदेका न भिद्यते' (*Pañcadaśī* of *Vidyāraṇya*). One, who realizes this, is transformed to peace, purity and beauty—the triple glory of the Supreme Being who is called God. This transformation is brought about by propitiating Gaṇapati who, with His threshers, cleans all impurities of *Jīvahood* in a devotee and grants him prosperity of Eternal Peace. Gaṇapati is, therefore, named Śūrpakarṇa. His grace separates all vice from virtue in a person and helps in realising the Supreme Self, as is said—

शूर्पकर्णं समाश्रित्य त्यक्त्वा मलविकारकम्।
ब्रह्मैव नर जातिस्थो भवेत्तेन तथा स्मृतः॥

Gaṇapati is also named *Mūṣakavāhana* and *Mūṣakadhvaja* meaning 'whose vehicle is a mouse' and 'who has an emblem of mouse on His banner' respectively. It is natural for a mouse to nibble whatever comes its way—cloth or clothes of all kinds, tins, plastic or wooden containers which contain grain, dry fruit or other provisions. It is interesting to note that a mouse stealthily carries nuts, almonds etc., and coins into its hole; eats the eatables at ease and preserves coins etc., in order. It has a complete analysis of what it finds while the owner and the people around, know not about the loss of their necessary as well as precious things. This quick and

continuous action of a mouse is analogous with wisdom that is endowed with analytical reasoning for determining the truth. This wisdom is known as *Sat-tarka* (सत्तर्क) 'the reason beyond all reasons'. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* calls it 'the truth of truths' 'सत्यस्य सत्यम्'.Gaṇapati is the deity of wisdom and it is befitting for him to have mouse as its ride *Mūṣakavāhana* for it is wisdom that lands one to the world of ultimate truth. Gaṇapati's mouse acts the Vedantic axiom 'Not this, not this (नेति नेति). It is this piercing intellect that rejects all what is not God.

People usually understand that they enjoy enjoyments of the world because their ego is limited to the body alone. But this is delusion. They do not know the real enjoyer. It is said in the *Śruti*—

न प्राणेन नापानेन मर्त्यो जीवति कश्चन।
इतरेण तु जीवन्ति यस्मिन्नेतावुपाश्रितौ।।

"Mortals do not live merely by the incoming and outgoing of breaths. The cause of life is some other thing that supports these breaths." Therefore it is *Īśvara* who enjoys everything while mortals remain unaware of this, because of delusion and ignorance. It is, virtually, *Īśvara* who pervades and persuades everything to action and enjoyment of pain or pleasure. This is quite analogous with the actions of a mouse, who enjoys (nibbles, steals and eats) unseen by anybody. A mouse acts like a thief. In the same way *Īśvara* enjoys all but the owners, due to being engrossed in the ego, know it not. This is characteristic of Gaṇapati's mouse, and suggests the appellation *Mūṣakadhvaja*. The *Purāṇa* declares—

ईश्वरः सर्वभोक्ताच चौरवत्तत्र संस्थितः।
तदेवं मूषकः प्रोक्तो मनुजानां प्रचालकः।।
मायया गूढरूपः स भोगान् भुङ्क्ते हि चौरवत्।।

"Gaṇeśa is pure-consciousness, bliss and all pervading reality. He makes this world move, live and annihilate. Therefore it is quite appealing to worship Gaṇeśa at the commencement of the performance of every act in life.

Looking intently at the image of Gaṇeśa, it appears like the sacred syllable 'ॐ'. In the sacred ordinance Gaṇeśa is accepted as

the formation of the syllable *Om*. A story in the *Purāṇas* goes that once Śiva and Pārvatī (*Śakti*) during their meditation on 'ॐ' intently gazed upon the syllable on the screen. Instantly they were surprisingly pleased to see Gajānana breaking through the wall and appearing before them in divine affection. *Smṛti* says—'प्रणवश्छन्दसामपि' (*Om* is the essence of the *Vedas*). Therefore also it is proper to worship Gaṇapati first of all the deities (*Devatās*).

Gaṇapati is truly *Parabrahma*—existence, knowledge and bliss (*Saccidānanda*), whose appellations are numerous.

The really wise persons acknowledge only the *Ātmā* to be the base of entire universe and God absolute and worship the same. The modern physicist is acquainted with and aware of the atomic energy and its potentiality but being unintroduced to the spiritual science, he knows nothing about the divine atoms of spirit and the spiritual inner world. He is not at all attracted by the atoms of *Ātmā*. Just as the earthly atoms and its potential energy have been invented through the medium of research and concentration of mind, similarly the subtle powers and energy of the subtle world has been searched long long ago. In our body we have five sensory nerves and five motor nerves and four internal instrumental faculties. The powers behind these fourteen senses, are known as fourteen gods. The ruler and the leader of these fourteen gods is Lord Gaṇeśa. Those perfect *Yogīs* realise and know that there is a *Gaṇeśa Cakra* in the body known as *Mūlādhāra* situated between the anus and the procreating organ. Through meditation the *Yogīs* perceive it. It is like a lotus in shape. The *Yogīs* through their mystic powers visualise the petals, colour, the real lessons, the seed (*Bīja*), vehicle and the presiding deity of the plexus, their qualities and powers. The *Sādhaka* who concentrates his mind on this *Mūlādhāra* and its presiding deity Gaṇeśa, gets knowledge and good health. That is why Lord Gaṇeśa is worshipped in any and every undertaking.

—*Compiled*

Glory of Gaṇeśa Tattva

—Swami Sri Sharananandaji Maharaja

Each and every human being is inherently a seeker of truth by virtue of his human birth. This is so because everything which is required for the attainment of goal of life has already been given to each and every human being since birth by the motiveless grace of God. Attaining one's goal of life the aspirant is useful not only for oneself but also for the world and its creator as well. Thus the aspirant is said to be useful for all. The personality of a man consists of the body and the Self. *Satsaṅga* is the basic requirement of the Self. Acceptance of the fundamental truths of life and giving up association with what one knows to be *A-sat* (not true or non-eternal) is known as *Satsaṅga.* This *Satsaṅga* is the worship of the foremost deity Gaṇeśa. Steadfast devotion to such worship makes a man faultless and a liberated soul and an ardent lover of God. Such spiritual elevation is the glory of *Gaṇeśa Tattva.*

The thirst for *Satsaṅga* (acceptance of truth) does get awakened through spiritual discourses, divine thinking and selfless actions but *Satsaṅga* is the basic want for the Self (as distinct from the body). The above mentioned three factors involve physical and mental effort and dependence on others but the *Satsaṅga* as defined above involves no such effort and dependence. Rather it can be had independently. In the light of our own discriminative faculty it is quite evident that the body and the world belong to a category distinct from the 'Self' (the core of the human personality). Things essentially different in nature can never have eternal union and eternal affinity. From this viewpoint the man has his unity only with that infinite, eternal, sentient, blissful, independent, immortal and

unborn *Tattva.* That *Tattva* alone is one's own for a human being. One has a spontaneous and effortless awakening of immense love and constant remembrance for what is one's own. With awakening of such remembrance the senses forsake their attachment for sense objects; the mind becomes free of worldly thoughts and the intellect develops an attitude of equanimity and further it makes the aspirant desirelessness knowledge and love incarnate.

From this angle *Satsaṅga* is the only path leading to accomplishment. What leads to accomplishment is *Gaṇeśa Tattva.*

To attain one's end it is essential that one must accept *Gaṇeśa Tattva (Satsaṅga)* because through *Satsaṅga* alone one discards things which are untruth, therefore the true and keen aspiration of an aspirant leads to one's success. The goal is not that which is not present at all times, at all places and in all beings. A human being cannot truly be called a *Sādhaka* unless he has a keen aspiration for attaining his goal. By accepting this truth the *Sādhaka* gets merged in *Sādhana Tattva,* which in itself is the life of *Sādhaka* and the glory of the *Sādhya* (End). To accept its eternal existence, its glory and one's affinity with one's goal is *Satsaṅga.*

In the eye of a *Sādhaka* none has its own independent existence except that of his own Goal. By accepting this reality a *Sādhaka* becomes desireless and devoid of possessive spirit and thus gets merged into *Sādhana Tattva.* Such is the experience of aspirants who have strong faith and belief in God. The little self or the ego consists of two elements. The hunger or want for God and desires for worldly objects. Keen aspiration for God naturally devours the fleeting desires (born of wrong identification with the body) for mundane objects. When only this one aspiration remains in life, it is fulfilled automatically and the ego is annihilated and consequently only cherishing of the exchange of love between *Sādhana Tattva* and *Sādhya* remains.

As *Sādhya* is immutable, boundless and infinite so is the *Sādhana Tattva.* The aspirant *(Sādhaka)* gets merged into *Sādhana Tattva.* From *Sādhana Tattva Sādhya* gets ever new love which

knows no loss, satiety or end and hence boundless. The limitless *Sādhana Tattva* and the infinite *Sādhya Tattva* abide in *Sādhaka* himself. But this mystery is unfolded only through *Satsaṅga*. From this angle only through *Gaṇeśa Tattva Sādhaka* gets merged into love and the cosmic beloved. To unravel this secret in scriptures there is a mention of cherishing of the exchange of love between Gaurī-Śaṅkara, Sītā-Rāma and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Discarding that which is not worth doing, one becomes absolutely devoted to one's duty. Complete and correct performance and devotion to one's duty puts an end to the existing attachment of a person towards body and world and it leads to the building of an ideal society. In the life of a man devoted to his duty; no trace of desire for power remains. His devotion to duty is complete and expects nothing in return. With the end of greed for power the spiritual aspirant becomes completely free from anger. When passion and anger cease to exist *Yoga* (desirelessness) and *Smṛti* (constant remembrance) are automatically awakened. With attainment of *Yoga* the knowledge of truth dawns. Continuous remembrance of God gets transformed into eternal love for God. All spiritual endeavours get dissolved into love. Love is the spiritual feature of the Lord and the life of the lover. The fulfilment of life lies in attainment of Love. This is the highest evolution of a *Sādhaka*. The beginning and end of the endeavour of an aspirant consist in *Satsaṅga* itself. *Satsaṅga* is not the physical effort or practice rather it is the basic want of the Self. All the aspirants are always quite independent in accepting fundamental truths which is the basic duty of each and every aspirant. Without accepting such truths it is impossible to have an all-round spiritual development. There is no dependence on others or incapability in accepting these truths and thus keeping oneself always devoted to one's own basic duty.

Gaṇeśa Tattva has no beginning. It is unborn and unworldly *Tattva*. A *Sādhaka* has a clear knowledge of the beginning, changefulness and non-existence of the body and the world but he has no such knowledge regarding his own 'Self' (distinct

from the body). Therefore the self also being beginningless and eternal, is known as *Gaṇeśa Tattva.* In the self the want for God 'Is' subsists. This want culminates in attainment of God that is known by the term 'Is' (due to having its own eternal existence and affording existence to all other things which have no existence of their own). This 'Self' interpenetrates 'Is' and 'Is' interpenetrates the 'Self'. When the Self accepts the eternal existence of 'Is' then the self is designated as *Sādhaka.* The basic duty of a *Sādhaka* is to accept the glory of God and his own affinity with Him. *Sādhaka* perpetually abides only in that whose importance is realized by him. He develops unfathomable love only in that whose importance is realized by him. One who is ever, everywhere and everybody's own must be accepted as one's own and also abiding in one's own self. The basic duty of a *Sādhaka* is acceptance of this fact which is called as *Satsaṅga.* In this way through such *Satsaṅga* every aspirant having worshipped this foremost deity Gaṇeśa merges with Love and the cosmic Beloved quite easily.

—*Kalyana*

One who is desireless who has got complete control over his mind and senses, who has given up all kinds of hoarding, who does actions only for the maintenance of the body, he never commits a sin. One who has transcended the pairs of opposite, who does not have jealousy to any person, who is equally neutral to success and failure and who is content with whatever he gets, is not bound eventhough acting. One who is free from attachment to all the sense-objects, and is a man of self-realization, all his actions are sacrifices and they dissolve into nothingness viz.; they have no binding effect.

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (III. 27—29)

Gaṇeśa: As He is Described in Purāṇas

—Om Prakash Dubey

The diversity of deities, is part of the *Hindu Dharma.* The various gods are elaborately praised and in their individual hymns, each is praised as Supreme. To celebrate one deity, does not mean there is no room for the celebration of another. Each is seen, by those who are devotees, as Supreme in every sense. In *Hindu Dharma*, Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed god, is considered as the primal god of all worship. He is the god of prudence and sagacity. Gaṇeśa, as the remover of obstacles, is invoked by all Hindus at the beginning of every undertaking. Image of Gaṇeśa can be seen on the roadside to bless the safe journey, in the shop and bank to run the business profitably, in the front of building for prosperous living, in the beginning of book for timely and correctly completion of the book and upon the whole, there is perhaps no deity in the Hindu pantheon so often seen and addressed.

Although Gaṇeśa is generally considered to be eldest son of Śiva and Pārvatī, the *Purāṇas* attribute His origin to one or the other of the couple but not to both. It is important to mention here that Śiva and Pārvatī together could not have progeny. Once all the gods went together to Śiva and requested not to beget any child, because child born of their union would be too terrible to live with. Śiva consented, but Pārvatī, knowing this, was enraged and cursed the gods that their wives also must remain without children like herself. So none of the goddesses could bear children. The so-called sons and daughters of the gods are mind born children or those produced in some mysterious way unknown to us.

According to *Matsya Purāṇa,* Pārvati produced Gaṇeśa to

guard while she was in the bath-tub. She took the oil and ointments used at the bath and together with other elements formed into the figure of a man to which she gave life by sprinkling it with the water of the Ganges. While this door-keeper of her bathing apartment was on duty, Śiva came and was considerably surprised. He, however, tried to force an entry and a quarrel broke out between the two in which Śiva cut off Gaṇeśa's head. When Pārvatī came out and saw that her son was killed, she was very sad and to console her Śiva ordered the first head to be found, of any living being, to be brought to Him. This happened to be an elephant's head which Śiva clapped with the body of Gaṇeśa and gave Him life. The elephant is considered an animal of great prudence and sagacity and Gaṇeśa's head is probably symbolical of those characteristics of the god.

In the *Varāha Purāṇa*, Śiva alone is said to have produced Gaṇeśa. The narration is such as once upon a time the sages went to Śiva and asked the means by which obstacles occured in accomplishing deeds can be opposed. They said—"O Mahādeva, God of gods, three eyed, bearer of trident, it is Thou alone who canst create a being capable of opposing obstacles to the commission of improper acts." Hearing these words Śiva looked at Pārvatī and whilst thinking how He could fulfil the wishes of the gods, from the splendour of His countenance there sprang up into existence a youth shedding radiance around, endowed with the qualities of Śiva and evidently another Rudra and captivating by His beauty the female inhabitants of heaven. Pārvatī seeing His beauty and in her anger pronounced this curse— "Thou shalt not offend my sight with the form of a beautiful youth, therefore assume an elephant's head and a large belly and thus shall all Thy beauties vanish. Śiva then addressed His son saying—"Thy name shall be Gaṇeśa and the son of Śiva, thou shalt be chief of the *Vināyakas* and *Gaṇas*, success and disappointment shall spring from thee, and great shall be thine influence amongst the gods and in sacrifices and all affairs. Therefore shalt thou be worshipped and invoked the first on all occasions, the object and prayers of him who omits to do so shall fail."

Skanda Purāṇa gives another account of Gaṇeśa's origin. During the twilight that intervened between the *Dwāpara* and *Kaliyuga* barbarians and sinners obtained entrance to heaven by visiting the shrine of Somanātha. Consequently, the heaven became overcrowded and hells were without inhabitants. In this predicament Indra together with other gods visited to Śiva and appealed for remedy. Śiva advised them to address their complaints to Pārvatī. Pārvatī was propitiated and she produced a wondrous being with four arms and an elephant's head by rubbing her body who created obstacles to unwanted people going to heaven by diverting their longing for pilgrimages to Somanātha.

Gaṇeśa has only one tusk and the other was knocked off by Paraśurāma. It is narrated that once Paraśurāma visited mount Kailasa, the abode of Śiva, to meet Śiva. Śiva was at sleep and Paraśurāma was not allowed to see Him by Gaṇeśa. Paraśurāma, however, was in a hurry and wanted immediate audience and asked Gaṇeśa to wake up Śiva. Gaṇeśa refused to disturb His father's sleep. The two started an argument which led to blows. Gaṇeśa caught Paraśurāma in His trunk and threw him violently to the ground. Paraśurāma picked himself up and threw his axe on Gaṇeśa which knocked off one of His tusks. Knowing this incident Pārvatī arrived on the scene and was about to curse Paraśurāma. But the gods interceded on his behalf and also Brahmā promised her that, though deprived of one of His tusks, her son should be worshipped first of all by the other gods and human beings.

There are five Hindu gods who are worshipped in their symbolic forms (*Liṅga*). They are Viṣṇu, Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Sūrya and Śakti. Śālagrāma is the *Liṅga* of Viṣṇu, Bāṇa is the *Liṅga* of Śiva, a rectangular red stone is the *Liṅga* of Gaṇeśa, *Sphaṭika* is the *Liṅga* of Sūrya and a metallic *Yantra* is the *Liṅga* of Durgā.

—*Compiled*

Prayer to Lord Gaṇeśa

—Sadhvi Sri Kamlesh Kumari

O auspicious Lord Gaṇeśa!
We salute You, again and again.
Of all gods, You are the main,
First to be remembered and invoked near,
First to be worshipped, to all ever dear.

O beautiful Lord Gaṇeśa!
We worship You, again and again.
May Your grace on us ever rain.
Every home has Your sacred shrine,
Shower on us Your blessings divine.

O merciful Lord Gaṇeśa!
We bow to You, again and again.
Remove our troubles, remove our pain,
Remove our sorrows, remove our strife,
Remove the obstacles in our life.

O benevolent Lord Gaṇeśa!
We pray to You, again and again.
Turn all our losses into gain.
Grant us happiness, grant us health,
Grant us wisdom, grant us wealth.

O powerful Lord Gaṇeśa!
We remember You, again and again.
May everybody be healthy, every mind sane,
Remove our every calamity,
Grant us peace, joy, prosperity.

Śrī Gaṇeśa: In Orissan Culture and Literature

—*Prof. Satyananda Swain*

Orissa is the confluence of all the streams of spiritual consciousness of the world. It has been the happy haunting ground of all the preceptors and disciples of all the religions of the world. The propounders of almost all the faiths of humanity have paid visit to this holy land and left their foot-prints in the cultural ground of Orissa. The pious people of the state, treasure their memory and show them in their day to day practices. The *Śāktas*, the *Śaivas*, the *Vaiṣṇavas,* the *Sauras*, the Buddhists and the *Jainas* have all prospered in this land. Naturally the *Gāṇapatyas* (the worshippers of Gaṇapati) are no exception. Though Śrī Gaṇeśa claims no shrine of world fame like Jagannātha, Liṅgarāja or Koṇārka temples, He has become an inseparable entity of Orissan culture.

The image of this elephant-headed deity has His primal position almost in all the temples of Orissa. As the darling of Śiva and Pārvatī, Śrī Gaṇeśa claims the worshipful attention of the *Śaivas* and the *Śāktas*. So in the *Śaiva* and *Śākta* temples, His image is worshipped with due devotion. The famous Mahāvināyaka temple in Jaipur district of Orissa is named after Gaṇapati, though the presiding deity is Śiva.

Śrī Gaṇeśa enjoys His primal position in the field of religious practice too. He is the first among the five gods (*Pañcadeva* — Gaṇeśa, Nārāyaṇa, Rudra, Ambikā and Bhāskara).

As the Lord of learning, Śrī Gaṇeśa is worshipped in the schools and colleges on the *Haritālikā*, the day of His birth.

His entrance into the *Vaiṣṇava* fold makes an interesting study. Jagannātha temple is the central shrine of *Vaiṣṇava* practice and

the cultural capital of Orissa. The importance of Śrī Gaṇeśa there, is remarkable.

There is spot in this temple precinct called *Vaṭa* Gaṇeśa. Jagannātha Dāsa, the author of Oriya *Bhāgavata* used to recite the *Bhāgavatam* sitting there. Śrī Caitanya came across him there and conferred the title of *Atibādī* (very great) on him.

An interesting anecdote of *Dardhyata Bhauti* (a poetic biography of dedicated devotees) tells us how Lord Jagannātha identified himself with Śrī Gaṇeśa to prove his all pervasive quality.

Centuries back, there lived a pious Bṛahmin named Gaṇapati Bhaṭṭa in Karnatak. He was a devotee of *Brahma*. To him *Brahma* was none else but Śrī Gaṇeśa. A vision of this elephant-headed god would grant salvation, life eternal. It was his firm conviction. He read scriptures to discover ways and means of *Brahma*-realisation. While reading *Brahma Purāṇa* he learned that *Brahma* manifests on the blue mountain (*Brahma Vijaye Nīlagiri*) i. e., Puri, Orissa. So he left for Puri instantly. He reached the outskirts of city after long and tedious journey. There he met thousands of pilgrims returning home after the vision of *Brahma*.........Gaṇapati Bhaṭṭa was intrigued. He would not make out how one would live after the vision of the *Brahma*, cosmic self. His eagerness subsided. In order to make a field study he went on, however.

It was holy *Devaśayana Pūrṇimā* (the full moon of *Jyeṣṭha*). The deities had been brought out of the *sanctum sanctorum*for holy ablution as a preparatory of historic car festival. The images of Balabhadra, Jagannātha and Subhadrā, had been kept on a raised platform for the devotees to have a vision of the Lords. Gaṇapati was among the devotees. He looked intently at the image and expressed his disgust and despair audibly. He grumbled that Jagannātha could never be *Brahma* as he did not have an elephant trunk. A devotee standing beside him advised him to stare at the images with concentration. He would be able to see *Brahma* as he imagined Him to be. Gaṇapati Bhaṭṭa gazed and gazed, lo! and

behold.Trunk appeared with vermilion coating and restless animation. Gaṇapati gasped. His eyes were filled with tears of joy. He could not contain himself and shouted aloud the victory of *Brahma*. The moment of excitement passed and tumultuous Gaṇapati Bhaṭṭa breathed his last. He attained salvation at the sight of *Gaṇapati Brahma*.

Since then every year on the full moon day of *Jyeṣṭha* Jagannātha is dressed like Śrī Gaṇeśa.

Hence Śrī Gaṇeśa has been embedded in Orissan culture and literature as a guide a creativity and harbinger of all that is auspicious.

नेता नियन्त्रयितुमेव सदाखिलानां
बद्धादरो भवतु सेतुभिदां खलानाम्।
इत्यन्तरायसमुदायहरो भवेन्नः
संसूचयन् स मुदितोऽङ्कुशधारणेन॥

Lord Gaṇeśa—the annihilator of obstacles, inspiring the leaders of the society to maintain the decorum and chastise those who try to disrupt it. The goad in His hand is symbolic of controlling the unsocial and antisocial elements.

जन इह सकलः प्रसादकः स्यात्
स जनतयाऽऽद्रियते विषादको न।
इति पिशुनयतीव मोदकानां
ग्रहविधिना बत कोऽपि नः शरण्यः॥

People always respect those who try to enhance their pleasure and not those who make them sad. Indicating this idea and to inspire everybody to be good-natured, Lord Gaṇeśa with sweet-ball in His trunk, may protect us.

Gaṇeśa: The First and Foremost God of Democracy

—Dr. Umesh Patri

In the cultural history of India Gaṇeśa is the first and foremost God whose name is invoked at the commencement of all undertakings literal or commercial. So it is said—"*agre pūjyo gaṇādhipaḥ*". Before paying homage to other gods the name of Gaṇeśa is remembered first, thus: "Salutation to the five gods, with Gaṇeśa at the beginning."

Gaṇeśa is known by various names such as Ekadanta (one tusked), Gajānana (elephant-faced), Gaṇapati (lord of the people), Gaṇeśvara (God of the people), Heramba (glutton), Lambodara (pendent-bellied), Vakratuṇḍa (twisted-trunk), Vighneśa (obstacle remover Lord), and Vināyaka (the leader).

But the importance of Gaṇeśa is felt in two of His names such as *Vighnarāja* or trouble maker for the troubling one and *Siddhidātā* or a God to bestow instant success in the *Brahmavaivarta, Skanda* and *Gaṇeśa Purāṇas* alongwith *Gaṇapati Tattva* and *Gaṇapati Upaniṣad.* That way Gaṇeśa is remembered as a God of good luck, wisdom and intelligence. An example can be cited how Gaṇeśa won from His rival brother Kārttikeya in a bet to race around the world. While Kārttikeya tried hard for such a tour Gaṇeśa sat and made a circumambulation of His father Śiva,the Lord of the universe and won the race. It is also said that He sat at home and studied the old texts on geography and proved that He had been to the world ground and won the race. So He is praised in our prayers—

The universe is manifest in thee;
earth, fire, air and ether.

Thou art Brahmā, Thou art Viṣṇu, Thou art Rudra.

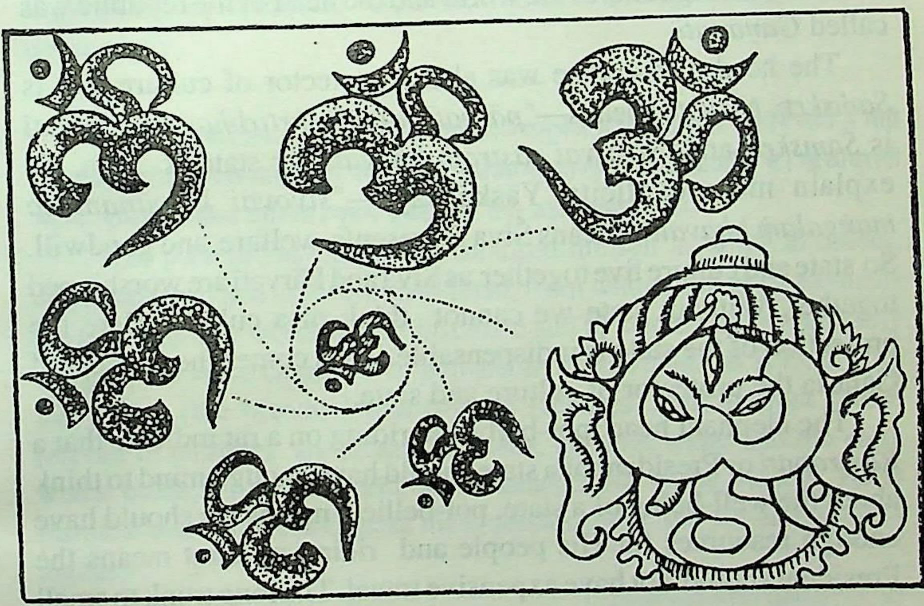
Thou art superior to the three deities.

(A. Getty, *Gaṇeśa* Oxford 1936.5)

Evolution of Gaṇeśa—

From a historical point of view for the first time the word *Gaṇapati* was used in *Ṛgveda* (II. 23.1) as "*gaṇānāṁ twā gaṇapati*". This verse is repeated in *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* and identifies Gaṇapati with Bṛhaspati. The Ṛgvedic philosophical concept became embodied during the *Mahābhārata* period. Before writing *Mahābhārata,* the prophet Vyāsa felt the need of a shorthand writer to scribe the whole *Mahābhārata* and Gaṇeśa alone was found suitable to undertake the most difficult task and impressed Vyāsa with His exceptional speed in scribing the whole historical text in poetry.

It seems the ancient myth-makers design the deity of Gaṇeśa with elephant head most probably with the monosyllabic symbol of *Om.* The evolution of Gaṇeśa might have taken place as follows—



Vedic Interpretation—

Marx once remarked that the reality of the past seems reflected in mythological fantasy. Engles: *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Mascow, 1952. 170). Therefore it is a necessary part of our investigation to examine the mythological fantasy to arrive at the ancient reality.

The ancient myth makers designed the deity of Gaṇeśa with elephant head and human body and depicted as pink, corpulent, pot-bellied , with one tusk and riding on a rat. This paradoxical description of Gaṇeśa needs an explanation from a Vedic point of view.

Yajurveda (23.19) mentions the name of Gaṇapati as the head of the state or the chief of the *Gaṇa* or the people. Subsequently He became *Lokabandhu* and *Lokanātha* or the friend of all, protector of the people. There are numerous examples to state from *Ṛgveda* (V. 66. 6) and *Yajurveda* (IX. 40) that India was credited for the most ancient republic of the world and the head of the republic was called *Gaṇapati.*

The head of the state was also a protector of culture that is *Saṁskṛti. Nirukta* speaks—"*pārvatī vai saṁskṛtirbhavati*", Pārvatī is *Saṁskṛti* and "*śivo vai rāṣṭraṁ bhavati*" or state is Śiva. To explain more explicity Yāska says—"*śivovai kalyāṇaṁ ca maṅgalaṁ bhavaṭi*", means Śiva represents welfare and goodwill. So state and culture live together as Śiva and Pārvatī are worshipped together. Without state we cannot think of a culture. Here the protection of the state is indispensable. Thus comes the concept of Gaṇeśa the protector of culture and state.

The elephant head, pot-belly and riding on a rat indicate that a *Rāṣṭrapati* or President of a state should have enough mind to think about the well-being of a state, pot-bellied means He should have enough resources for His people and riding on a rat means the President should not have expensive travel. The long trunk to smell and know means and should have reliable vigilance department and small eyes indicate His inward vision and through long ears He should listen to the complaint of the public. In His four hands He

holds lily, discus, axe and sweetened rice-ball symbolizing four important departments of a state. Lily stands for prosperity, discus and axe stand for punishment to the criminals and sweetened rice-ball means food for all. If all these criteria are fulfilled, a nation can be an independent, sovereign, democratic republic.

It is hard to say whether Gaṇapati represents a *Rāṣṭrapati* of a nation or a person who was once the head of Vedic nationhood? But He was well-known all over the world. His icons are now found in East. Asia, Nepal, China, Japan, Turk, Tibet, Burma, Siam, Java, Bornio, and even Mexico. The archaeological remains at the *Māyā* and pre-Columbian civilization of Mexico suggest that Gaṇeśa was not unknown to the people of central America.

Whether theist or atheist, Gaṇeśa remains a deity for all. Jaina's *Vināyaka Tantra* and Buddhist *Gaṇapati Haudaya* remind us for Gaṇeśa as the symbolic God and the first and foremost Lord of democracy.

सोऽपश्यदात्मनाऽऽत्मानं गजरूपधरं देवं शशिवर्णंचतुर्भजं यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते यतो वाऽऽयन्ति यत्रैव यन्ति च। तदेतदक्षरं परं ब्रह्म। एतस्माज्जायते प्राणो मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च। खं वायुरापो ज्योतिः पृथिवी विश्वस्य धारिणी। पुरुषं एवेदं विश्वं तपो ब्रह्म परामृतमिति।

"That personified existence visualised himself as white in colour, elephant-faced and in four-armed form; from whom five great elements are emanated; by whom all are sustained and in whom all are eventually merged, the same Gaṇeśa is imperishable *Parabrahma*. It is from Him that *Prāṇa* (life breath) *Mana* (mental faculties) and different senses (eleven in number) are emanated; ether, air, fire, water and the earth which holds the entire world, are emanated. He is the *Puruṣa*, He is *Parabrahma* and He is Gaṇeśa the embodiment of *Sat, Cit* and *Ānanda* together.

—*Gaṇeśatāpinyupaniṣad* (I. 2)

Gaṇeśa Pañcāyatana
(General Methods of Worship)

In every religion or sect, certain deities are worshipped in certain ways. In India we have got a number of religions and a religion is divided into so many sects and cults. Every sect or even sub-sect has got its own deity and its own chosen form to worship.

The great Śaṅkarācārya of Kerala eventhough a supporter of *Vedantic* monism, established five-god-worship for everybody, if possible, to maintain the unity and integrity of India. Generally the followers of *Pañcadevopāsanā* are known as *Smārtas.* It is obligatory for them to worship the five deities—Viṣṇu, Śiva, Sūrya, Durgā and Gaṇeśa. It is customary in Hindu religion that every deity has his own *Pañcāyatana.*

On the occasion of *Pañcāyatana-Pūjā* certain ritualistic rules are to be observed strictly. A *Vedī* or a *Yantra* on a metal plate (gold, silver, copper or even iron as required) is necessary. In the worship of *Gaṇeśa-Pañcāyatana* the places of different deities are fixed and there should be no interchange of place for the said deities. The image of Gaṇeśa or His symbol like a coconut or betel-nut should be centrally placed. Viṣṇu should be in the left upper corner, Śiva in the right upper corner, Sun-god should be in the right lower corner and Durgā in the left lower corner. These are the positions of the five members of *Gaṇeśa-Pañcāyatana.* It should be remembered that by the change of their places a worshipper may incur the loss of this or that. The common *Mantra* for *Gaṇeśa-Pañcāyatana* is " ॐ गणेशविष्णुशिवसूर्यदुर्गाभ्यो नमः".

Gaṇeśa Pañcāyatana (As Per *Āhnika Sūtrāvalī*)

Viṣṇu		Śiva
	Gaṇeśa	
Durgā		Sūrya

Offering of seat—

अनेकरत्नसंयुक्तं नानामणिगणान्वितम्।
कार्तस्वरमयं दिव्यमासनं परिगृह्यताम्।।
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, आसनार्थे तुलसीदलं समर्पयामि।

I offer to the deities a golden throne studded with many precious gems. They may kindly accept it.

Offering of water for washing feet—

गङ्गादिसर्वतीर्थेभ्य आनीतं तोयमुत्तमम्।
पाद्यार्थं सम्प्रदास्यामि गृह्णन्तु परमेश्वराः।।
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, पादयोः पाद्यं समर्पयामि।

I offer the holy water from the holy rivers and religious centres for washing your feet. Be kind to accept it.

Offering of libation for washing hands—

गन्धपुष्पाक्षतैर्युक्तमर्घ्यं सम्पादितं मया।
गृह्णन्त्वर्घ्यं महादेवाः प्रसन्नाश्च भवन्तु मे॥
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, हस्तयोरर्घ्यं समर्पयामि।

I have prepared water for your libation, mixed with perfumes, flowers and rice grains. The great lords be gratified and pleased with me.

Offering water for washing mouth—

कर्पूरेण सुगन्धेन वासितं स्वादु शीतलम्।
तोयमाचमनीयार्थं गृह्णन्तु परमेश्वराः॥
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, आचमनीयं जलं समर्पयामि।

The cool and tasty water perfumed with camphor etc., has been offered for washing your faces. Be kind to accept it.

Offering water for bath—

मन्दाकिन्याः समानीतैः कर्पूरागुरुवासितैः।
स्नानं कुर्वन्तु देवेशा जलैरेभिः सुगन्धिभिः॥
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, स्नानीयं जलं समर्पयामि।

This gangetic water perfumed with camphor and *Aguru* has been brought. Be kind to take bath with this fragrant water.

Water for Ācamana after bath—

स्नानान्ते आचमनीयं जलं समर्पयामि।

Offering Pañcāmṛta for bath—

पयो दधि घृतं चैव मधु च शर्करान्वितम्।
पञ्चामृतं मयाऽऽनीतं स्नानार्थं प्रतिगृह्यताम्॥
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, पञ्चामृतस्नानं समर्पयामि।

I have brought my lords, this *Pañcāmṛta* consisting of milk, curd, ghee, honey and sugar for your bath. Be kind to accept it.

Offering fragrant water for bath—

मलयाचलसम्भूतचन्दनेन विमिश्रितम्।
इदं गन्धोदकं स्नानं कुङ्कुमाक्तं नु गृह्यताम्॥
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, गन्धोदकं समर्पयामि।

I offer this holy water, perfumed with sandal brought from the mountain Malaya. It is again mixed with *Kuṁkuma*. Be kind to accept it for your bath.

After this, pure water again should be offered to the deities.

Offering water only for bath—

मलयाचलसम्भूतचन्दनाऽगरुमिश्रितम् ।
सलिलं देवदेवेश! शुद्धस्नानाय गृह्यताम्।।
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, शुद्धोदकस्नानं समर्पयामि।

O god of gods, kindly accept for your bath (शुद्धस्नान) this water mixed with sandal and *Aguru.*

Then again water should be offered for *Ācamana* saying—
स्नानान्ते आचमनीयं जलं समर्पयामि। श्री गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः।

Offering of garments—

शीतवातोष्णसंत्राणे लोकलज्जानिवारणे।
देहालङ्करणे वस्त्रे भवद्भ्यो वाससी शुभे।।
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, वस्त्रमुपवस्त्रं च समर्पयामि।

O lords, I offer these garments to protect your bodies from cold, heat and wind at the same time to adorn yourself and to look descent. Be kind to accept it.

Again water should be offered saying—
वस्त्रान्ते आचमनीयं जलं समर्पयामि। श्रीगणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः।

Offering of sacred thread—

नवभिस्तन्तुभिर्युक्तं त्रिगुणं देवतामयम्।
उपवीतं मया दत्तं गृह्णन्तु परमेश्वराः।।
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, यज्ञोपवीतं समर्पयामि।

Made of nine-fold threads representing the three *Guṇas* and the three gods, I am offering the sacred thread to you. O lords, be pleased and accept it.

Again water saying—
यज्ञोपवीतान्ते आचमनीयं जलं समर्पयामि।

Offering sandal-paste—

श्रीखण्डं चन्दनं दिव्यं गन्धाढ्यं सुमनोहरम्।
विलेपनं सुरश्रेष्ठ चन्दनं प्रतिगृह्यताम्।।
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, चन्दनानुलेपनं समर्पयामि।

I offer to you the sandal-paste divine, fragrant and lovely. Be kind to accept it.

Offering of garland—

माल्यादीनि सुगन्धीनि मालत्यादीनि भक्तितः।
मयाऽऽहृतानि पुष्पाणि पूजार्थं प्रतिगृह्यताम्॥
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, पुष्पमालां समर्पयामि।

O lords, be kind to accept this garland of beautiful and fragrant flowers like Mālatī, brought by me with devotion. I offer these flowers for your worship.

Offering of incense—

वनस्पतिरसोद्भूतो गन्धाढ्यो गन्ध उत्तमः।
आघ्रेयः सर्वदेवानां धूपोऽयं प्रतिगृह्यताम्॥
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः धूपं समर्पयामि।

I offer this incense worth smelling for gods, made of the essence from plants and herbs, very fragrant with desirable smell. Be kind to accept it.

Offering of lamp—

साज्यं च वर्तिसंयुक्तं वह्निना योजितं मया।
दीपं गृह्णन्तु देवेशास्त्रैलोक्यतिमिरापहम्॥
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, दीपं समर्पयामि।

I offer this lighted lamp full of ghee which is quite capable of removing darkness from all the three worlds. Be kind and accept it.

Then, one should wash his hands and offer *Naivedya* (special preparation of food for offering to the deities).

Offering of Naivedya—

शर्कराखण्डखाद्यानि दधिक्षीरघृतानि च।
आहारं भक्ष्यभोज्यं च नैवेद्यं प्रतिगृह्यताम्॥
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, नैवेद्यं समर्पयामि।

I offer this *Naivedya* made of sugar, curd, milk and ghee. It is eatable and worth enjoying. Be kind and accept it.

Again water saying—

नैवेद्यान्ते ध्यानं ध्यानान्ते आचमनीयं जलं समर्पयामि। उत्तरापोऽशनार्थं हस्तप्रक्षालनार्थं मुखप्रक्षालनार्थं च जलं समर्पयामि।

After offering *Naivedya* and water one should have a mental vision that the God has accepted his offering and is partaking it.

Offering of the seasonal fruits—

इदं फलं मया देव स्थापितं पुरतस्तव।
तेन मे सफलावाप्तिर्भवेज्जन्मनि जन्मनि।।
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, ऋतुफलानि समर्पयामि।

I have placed these seasonal fruits before you. By this act I may accomplish my aims in birth after birth.

After this ,water should be offered for *Ācamana* and *Uttarāpośana.*

Offering of betels—

पूगीफलं महद् दिव्यं नागवल्लीदलैर्युतम्।
एलालवंगसंयुक्तं ताम्बूलं प्रतिगृह्यताम्।।
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, मुखवासार्थे ताम्बूलं समर्पयामि।

Be kind O lords, to accept betel-nut, cardamom and clove.

Offering of Dakṣiṇā—

हिरण्यगर्भगर्भस्थं हेमबीजं विभावसोः।
अनन्तपुण्यफलदमतः शान्तिं प्रयच्छ मे।।
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, दक्षिणां समर्पयामि।

I offer this *Dakṣiṇā* of gold which was formerly located in the womb of Brahmā and which is the gold-seed from fire-god. It is a bestower of endless virtuous fruits. This may bring peace to me.

Offering of Āratī—

कदलीगर्भसम्भूतं कर्पूरं तु प्रदीपितम्।
आरार्तिकमहं कुर्वे पश्य मां वरदो भव।।
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, आरार्तिकं समर्पयामि।

I offer this *Āratī* of camphor which came out from banana-tree. Please cast a glance over it and be the bestower of boons to me.

Then one should pour some water in a conch-shell and move around the deities muttering the *Mantra*—

शङ्खमध्ये स्थितं तोयं भ्रामितं केशवोपरि।
अङ्गलग्नं मनुष्याणां ब्रह्महत्यां व्यपोहति।।

The water within the conch-shell, moved around over God, when touches the body, can remove the greatest sin of even *Brahma-Hatyā* (murdering a *Brāhmaṇa).*

This conch-shell with water should be moved around five times and then kept at its original place. After that the towel should also

be moved around the Lord. Now with both the palms should take the *Ārati* and wash his hands. The water of the conch-shell should be sprinkled on and over everybody present, then one should circumambulate or go round.

Pronouncing the following *Mantra* one should circumambulate the deity from left to right, four times. If there is no space one should move around on his place itself.

Mantra for circumambulation—

यानि कानि च पापानि जन्मान्तरकृतानि च।
तानि सर्वाणि नश्यन्तु प्रदक्षिणपदे पदे।।
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, प्रदक्षिणां समर्पयामि।

Whatever sins I have committed, either in this life or life before, may all be destroyed with the each step of circumambulation.

Offering of Mantra-Puṣpāñjali—

श्रद्धया सिक्तया भक्त्या हार्दप्रेम्णा समर्पितः।
मन्त्रपुष्पाञ्जलिश्चायं कृपया प्रतिगृह्यताम्।।
ॐ गणेशपञ्चायतनदेवताभ्यो नमः, मन्त्रपुष्पाञ्जलिं समर्पयामि।

O lords, be kind and accept this *Mantra-Puṣpāñjali* offered by me with all my devotion and love from the core of my heart.

Offering of obeisance—

खर्वं स्थूलतनुं गजेन्द्रवदनं लम्बोदरं सुन्दरं
प्रस्यन्दन्मदगन्धलुब्धमधुपव्यालोलगण्डस्थलम्।
दन्ताघातविदारितारिरुधिरैः सिन्दूरशोभाकरं
वन्दे शैलसुतासुतं गणपतिं सिद्धिप्रदं कामदम्।।

After this, the first of all *Prasāda* should be offered to the renowned saints and devotees of Gaṇeśa with the following *Mantra*—

गणेशो गालवो गार्ग्यो मङ्गलश्च सुधाकरः।
गणेशस्य प्रसादोऽयं सर्वे गृह्णन्तु भागिनः।।

After that the *Prasāda* should be distributed among all present there.

N.B.— From *Nityakarma-Pūjāprakāśa* published by Gita Press Gorakhpur.

Gaṇeśa and His Temples in Maharashtra

—*R. P. Gupta*

Gaṇeśa is worshipped not only in different parts of India, but He is worshipped in some of the Asian countries too such as Burma, Nepal, China, Japan, Cambodia and Thailand etc. In India worship of Gaṇeśa is most popular in Maharashtra where He is the family deity of many persons. Although practically every town and village of Maharashtra would have at least one Gaṇeśa temple, the places most famous as centres of Gaṇeśa-worship are the seats of the *Aṣṭavināyakas*. These places are narrated in the following verse—

स्वस्ति श्री गणनायको गजमुखो मोरेश्वरः सिद्धिदः।
बल्लालस्तु विनायकस्त्वथ मढे चिंतामणिस्थेवरे।।
लेण्याद्रौ गिरिजात्मजः सुवरदो विघ्नेश्वरश्चोझरे।
ग्रामे रांजण संस्थितो गणपतिः कुर्यात् सदा मंगलम्।।

There are—(1) Siddhi-Vināyaka (at Siddhitek) (2) Ballāla Vināyaka in Pali (3) Varad Vināyaka at Madh (4) Vighneśvara at Ojhar (5) Girijātmaja at Lenyadri (6) Mahā-Gaṇapati at Ranjangaon (7) Cintāmaṇi Gaṇapati at Theur and (8) Mayūreśvara at Morgaon. A brief description is given below—

(1) Siddhi-Vināyaka at Siddhitek—

Siddhitek is situated on the bank of river Bhīmā and is six miles from Boribel Rly. station on Dhond-Sholapur section. The temple stands on a hillock and was built by Ahalyābāī Holkar about the end of the 18th century. Various Marhaṭṭa rulers donated necessary funds for its daily rituals.

(2) Ballāla Vināyaka in Pali—

It is also known as Balleśwara. There is mention of this temple in *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* and *Mudgala Purāṇa*. Pali is in Kolaba district.

The brother of Nānā Faranavīsa got the present temple built while its *Sabhā Maṇḍapa* had been constructed by one,Ringe.

(3) Varada Vināyaka at Madh—

Madh is also in district Kolaba. It is said that installation of Gaṇeśa idol here was performed by the founder *Ṛṣi* of *Gāṇapatya* sect. For this reason this *Kṣetra* commands great respect and popularity though the temple is not a big one.

(4) Vighneśvara at Ojhar—

Ojhar is about six miles from Junnar. The temple is built of stone and is enclosed by walls all around. It is held in great esteem.

(5) Girijātmaja at Lenyadri —

The Gaṇeśa temple here is carved out of a rock and the image of Gaṇeśa is cut on a wall of the temple. It looks like a Buddhist *Vihāra.* It is said to have been built in the 8th or the 9th century.

(6) Mahā Gaṇapati at Ranjangaon—

Ranjangaon is on Pune-Ahmednagar road, about 55 miles from Pune. The temple is situated on roadside. This occupies a prominent place among the *Aṣṭavināyakas.* It is said that the original statue was hidden in an underground cell below the *Garbha-Gṛha* of the temple to save it from desecration at the hands of the Muslim invaders, where it is still lying. The present statue of Gaṇeśa was installed during the reign of the Peshwas.

(7) Cintāmaṇi Gaṇapati at Theur —

The nearest approach to Theur is from Lone Rly. station on Pune-Dhond section. The temple is a large one. It was built about the end of the 18th century. Peshwa Madhorao (I) had a fancy for this place and the ruins of his palace lie in the vicinity of the temple.

(8) Moreśvara at Morgaon—

This is the prime centre of the *Gāṇapatya* sect and foremost of the *Aṣṭa Vināyakas.* It is located at a distance of about 40 miles from Pune. The present statue of Gaṇeśa is of giant size and is said to be *Swayambhū* or self-created. It is a piece of crude craftmanship. It has four arms and three legs. He holds the *Pāśa* and *Aṅkuśa* in the upper arms. The lower left arm holds the *Modaka.* On His right is the statue

of *Siddhi* and on the left that of *Buddhi*. In front of the Gaṇeśa idol are statues of mouse and *Mayūra* of big size. In the inner courtyard of the temple there are eight other Gaṇeśa idols installed at separate places along with idols of *Siddhi* and *Buddhi* on their right and left and idols of mouse and *Mayūra* in front of each.

In the fourteenth century a great devotee of Gaṇeśa named Moraya Gosavī came here and he worshipped here for a long time. He also built a Gaṇeśa temple in Chinchavad near Pune. He had brought an idol of Gaṇeśa from *Brahma-Kamaṇḍalu Tīrtha* which he installed in this temple. He lived in Chinchavad but he visited Morgaon invariably twice a year on the *Caturthīs* of the months of *Māgha* and *Bhādrapada* for worship of his favourite deity.

Apart from *Aṣṭavināyaka Kṣetras* described above there are many other temples of Gaṇeśa in Maharashtra. The following deserve mention.

(1) Triśuṇḍa—

This is an ancient temple and is situated on the bank of river Nagajharī. On the walls of the temple *Gaṇeśa Mantras* are engraved in stone. For this reason it is said that this temple belongs to the *Tantra* sect. In an underground chamber is the *Samādhi* of its founder Datta Guru Mahārāja.

(2) Kasva Gaṇapati—

There was a devotee of Gaṇeśa named Ṭhākara. He was once asked in a dream to visit a certain place, dig out the earth and take out the idol of Gaṇeśa lying there. Accordingly Ṭhākara went there and on digging the ground he was surprised to find the idol. He brought that idol and installed it in a temple at Kasva. This is known as Jayate Gaṇeśa.

(3) Kanakeśvara Rāma Siddha-Vināyaka—

It is said that *Bhagavān* Paraśurāma had given to Swāmī Lambodarānanda a Gaṇeśa idol with *Siddhi*, *Buddhi* and *Lakṣa-Lābha* which was made of yellow marble. As this idol was meant only for meditation and not for worship it was safely kept in a copper box. Another Gaṇeśa idol was installed in the temple here for worship.

(4) Vara-Vināyaka Temple in Titwal —

Āśrama of Kaṇva *Muni* is said to have existed here and *Gāndharva* marriage of Śakuntalā with king Duṣyanta was also celebrated here. When Śakuntalā got separated from Duṣyanta she was advised by Kaṇva *Muni* to worship Gaṇeśa and observe *Vratas* to appease Him. Śakuntalā complied with the instructions of her god-father and by the grace of Gaṇeśa she was reunited with king Duṣyanta. It is said that the idol of Gaṇeśa in this temple is the same which Śakuntalā worshipped. It is said that this Lord is the family deity of former president S. Rādhākṛṣṇan.

(5) Bombay—

Two Gaṇeśa temples are very famous here. One is the Siddhi Vināyaka temple of Prabhā Devī. This temple is about two hundred years old. The idol of the Lord Gaṇeśa is carved in a black stone with a length of thirty inches and a width of twenty- four inches. It is one of the rare idols in Maharashtra since the trunk of the Lord is turned to the right. Besides the idol is visible from any point in *Maṇḍapa.* This has been recently renovated. The renovated temple has much larger accommodation. There is also the Siddhi Vināyaka temple of Jeṭhā Kāpad Market. It is said that Moolji Jeṭhā Kāpad Market once caught fire and was reduced to ashes. But this temple escaped miraculously. Besides these there are other Gaṇeśa temples among which those of Mumbādevī, Vāṇagaṅgā, Mandāra Gaṇeśa and Gaṇeśa Vādī are prominent.

(6) Sangli—

On the eastern bank of river Kṛṣṇā stands a temple which is very beautiful from architectural point of view. The sculpture of the cupolas over *Sabhā-Maṇḍapa* and *Garbhagṛha* are quite artistic. The Gaṇeśa idol is made of shining black stone.

(7) Nasik—

It is said this is one of the 56 Gaṇapatis. This is known as Higalyaka Gaṇapati. The idol is in the shape of a *Modaka* for which it is also known as Modakeśvara.

(8) Nanded—

The Gaṇeśa temple here is known as Citrakūṭa Gaṇeśa. It stands on water on the confluence of rivers Asna and Godāvarī. The idol is said to be self-created and it is installed over Śivaliṅgam.

खर्वं स्थूलतनुं गजेन्द्रवदनं लम्बोदरं सुन्दरं
प्रस्यन्दन्मधुगन्धलुब्धमधुपव्यालोलगण्डस्थलम् ।
दन्ताघातविदारितारिरुधिरैः सिन्दूरशोभाकरं
वन्दे शैलसुतासुतं गणपतिं सिद्धिप्रदं कामदम्॥

"I pay my obeisance to the Lord Gaṇeśa who is bestower of all accomplishments, fulfiller of his devotees' desires; who is short structured with a bulky body and elephant-faced yet charmingly handsome; whose temples discharge ichor which attracts the black bees by its odour; due to these hovering bees it appears as if his temples are always moving; whose face is besmeared with blood of the enemies coming out of the wounds in the chest made by his tusk and it appears as if vermilion powder has been applied."

—*Compiled*

Karma, Akarma and *Vikarma* are the three types of actions. One who perceives inaction in actions and actions in inactions, is an emancipated one eventhough living in the world, and he has done everything worth doing. One who starts acting without attachment with the fruits of actions, his actions are burnt altogether and are incapable of fructification. The wise call him learned. Discarding all sorts of desires one who is always complacent, he never does anything eventhough he may always remain engaged in performing actions.

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (III. 23—26)

There is a mention in *Rūpamaṇḍana* (V. 19-20) that in Gaṇeśa temple to the left of his image, Gajakarṇa should be installed, to the right Siddhi, to the north Gaurī, to the east Buddhi, to the south-east crescent moon, to the south Sarasvatī, to the west Kubera and just behind Kubera the idol of Dhūmraka should be installed.

— *Compiled*

Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa seeks Inspiration from Lord Gaṇeśa

—Dr. Suresh Chandra Sharma

It is a well known fact that Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahaṁsa worshipped God as the mother of the universe. His chosen deity was the Kālī of Dakṣiṇeśwara at Calcutta. After the vision of mother Kālī he became a God-intoxicated and God-absorbed man. He used to see the mother in everything of this universe sentient or insentient. At the maturity of his *Sādhanā* he worshipped his wife. Śrī Śāradāmaṇi verily as *Devī* with required rituals and other paraphernalia. This worship of his, was called as the *Ṣoḍaśī Pūjā* in his life. Since then Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa regarded every woman of the world whether evil or virtuous as the special manifestation of the mother of the universe. He had a great reverence for whole womankind.

One day someone asked Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa—"Why don't you lead a householder's life with your wife?" By way of answer he told the following story about Lord Gaṇeśa. One day Gaṇeśa in His boyhood scratched a cat with His nails. Later on He went to His mother—Pārvatī Devī and saw the scratches on her cheek. "How did you get these scratches mother" asked Gaṇeśa. Pārvatī Devī replied—"My son, you have done this yesterday. You have scratched my face with your nails." Mother Gaurī told that you have forgotten what you did to the cat. Gaṇeśa recalled His behaviour with cat but could not relate the event with the scratches on the face of Pārvatī Devī.

Then the mother explained Him that every female in the universe is my special manifestation and if someone hurts the woman he hurts me. Knowing this from Pārvatī Devī boy Gaṇeśa could marry none as every woman for Him signified the Divine Mother. This was the

case with Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa who perceived the divine mother in his wife also and hence could not lead an ordinary man's conjugal life. Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa caught this explanation from Lord Gaṇeśa to prove his own spiritual experience and conduct.

O son, even when the brahmins worship me, as Nārāyaṇa or Brahmā or when they perform sacrificial rites you will be worshipped at the outset.

If anyone performs auspicious rite laid down in the *Śrutis* or *Smṛtis* or any worldly ceremony without worshipping you at the outset, it will be turned inauspicious.

O Gajānana, you are worthy of being worshipped by brahmins, *Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas* and *Śūdras* by the offerings of splendid edibles and food stuffs for the achievement of all *Siddhis.*

—*Liṅga Purāṇa* (II. 22—24)

"My salutations to you O Lord Gaṇeśa. You are the remover of all obstacles, bestower of happiness to the mother goddess Pārvatī and exceptionally wise. Kindly liberate me from this ocean of the world. O Lord Vighnarāja, you provide joy to Lord Śiva; you bestow the knowledge mundane as well as spiritual to the devotees who meditate upon you; and you are a lone destroyer of the demons. My obeisance to you. O Lord Gaṇapati, you make everybody happy and prosperous; you are a lone protector of all the *Yajñas;* you are the fulfiller of all the desires. I bow my head before you."

—*Padma Purāṇa, Sṛṣṭi Khaṇḍa* (61. 26—28)

Where a guest unentertained, goes back disappointed, that house is abandoned by manes, gods, fires and preceptors unworshipped. Whatever sin like *Brahmahatyā* etc., are there, a man gets all of them by not worshipping the guest.

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (VIII. 39-40)

Śrī Gaṇeśa–the Supreme Deity

—Sri Prabhudattaji Brahmachari

The *Smārtas* (i. e., the followers of the *Smṛtis)* worship five deities. These five deities are—Śrī Viṣṇu, Śrī Śiva, Śrī Śakti, Śrī Sūrya and Śrī Gaṇapati. Of these *Smārtas* the *Vaiṣṇavas* regard Viṣṇu as the Supreme deity and worship the others as the *Aṅgas* or the aspects of Viṣṇu. Likewise, the *Śaivas* accept Śiva as the chief deity, *Śāktas* accept Śakti, the devotees of Sūrya, accept Sūrya and the devotees of Gaṇapati accept Gaṇeśa as the Supreme deity. They, however, offer worship to all the five. In fact, all these five are one in spite of their differences in names and forms, for the reason that the underlying reality is the one and non-dual, but in accordance with the disposition of the devotees, people worship, recognise and remember that one itself with various names and forms—"रूपैस्तु तैरपि विभासि यतस्त्वमेक:।"(Since you alone shine in those different forms).

The word Gaṇeśa means 'one who is the lord of all the creatures', "गणानां जीवजातानां य: ईश:—स्वामी स गणेश:". This Lord Gaṇapati came to exist in the beginning of creation. Some say that Gaṇeśa is the deity of non-Aryans and that the Aryans included him amongst the group of five deities just in order to facilitate the merger of the non-Aryans in their society. Such is the view of the foreigners who maintain that the Aryans have migrated to India from other lands, that they inhabited Indian lands having come from foreign countries as a stock of uncivilized nomads a few thousand years ago, and that they gradually went on becoming a civilized race. These thoughts are sheer misunderstandings and wrong notions.

According to our *Vedas* and scriptures, the creation itself came

into existence from *Puṣkara*. The Aryans have always been the inhabitants of this country. They were, not uncivilized in the beginning, but they were on the contrary, fully civilized, Vasiṣtha, Bharadvāja, Gautama, Atri, Pulaha, Pulastya and Kratu—all of them were perfect men and extremely civilized. It was here that the incarnations of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and Paraśurāma and others were manifested. Innumerable ages of *Satyayuga, Tretā, Dvāpara* and *Kali* have passed away, but the question of Aryans and non-Aryans did not arise ever. Human beings may be classified in two groups— those who live in the towns and those who live in the forests. Both groups were independent, but all the same helpful for each other. Gaṇapati has been the foremost adorable deity of the Aryans from time immemorial. In all the auspicious ceremonies Gaṇeśa is worshipped first of all. Even when the ceremonies of the marriage of Śiva with Pārvatī were performed, Gaṇeśa was worshipped first of all.

Some people put the question—"Gaṇeśa is the son of Śiva. He was not born at the time of Śiva's marriage. How could He have been worshipped at that time?"

In fact, Gaṇeśa is nobody's son. He is unborn, beginningless and endless. Gaṇeśa, who was the son of Śiva, was just an incarnation of the eternal Gaṇapati. Just as Viṣṇu is beginningless and Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Nṛsiṁha, Vāmana, Hayagrīva are His incarnations. Manu, Prajāpati, Raghu and Aja all used to worship Rāma. Rāma, the son of Daśaratha was just an incarnation of that beginningless Rāma. Likewise, Gaṇapati, the son of Śiva, is the incarnation of that Gaṇeśa. The *Purāṇas* contain numerous legends in this respect.

The *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* narrates that once upon a time Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa disguised as an old *Brāhmaṇa* went to see Pārvatī. He praised her and said—"O goddess, Śrī Kṛṣṇa who has assumed the form of Gaṇeśa constantly becomes your son in every *Kalpa*. He will very soon come to your lap as an infant. Having said so Kṛṣṇa disguised as *Brāhmaṇa* disappeared and immediately after an infant which was superbly lovely, tender and charming all over,

appeared on the bed of the mother Pārvatī. The child was so charming and possessed such a perfectly shaped body as all the seers and sages and gods like Brahmā, Viṣṇu and others started visiting to see it. One day the god Śani too came to see that lovely child. The wife of Śani being infuriated on some incident had hurled a curse on him that whosoever he would look upon would have his head severed from the body. For this reason Śani approached and sat quietly near Pārvatī. Pārvatī asked him repeatedly—"O Śani, why do you not look upon my son? Just see how lovely and charming my child is." Śani told her again and again—"O mother, my wife has uttered a curse upon me and I am therefore afraid that my glance may be harmful." But the mother did not listen to him. She kept on persuading him to look on the child. Śani too felt a desire to see that child. As soon as he looked upon Gaṇeśa, the head of the latter was severed from the body. There was great cry and bewailing all over. Lord Viṣṇu then brought from the forests on the bank of Puṣpabhadrā river the severed head of a newly born elephant and fixed it on the body of Gaṇeśa. Since that time Gaṇeśa became Gajānana.

According to the *Skandapurāṇa,* Pārvatī made a doll in the shape of a child with the rolls of the unguent and infused life into it. She accepted the child as her son and told—"I am going to take bath. Do not allow anybody to enter this place." Śiva arrived there just after that. The child forbade Him from entering. A fierce battle ensued between them with the result that Śiva severed the head of that child. When Pārvatī heard this she began to lament crying "O my son, my son." At that very time Gajāsura came to fight with Śiva. Śiva cut the head of Gajāsura and joined it on the body of that child. Thus Pārvatī's son became Gajānana.

There are many other similar narratives in the *Purāṇas.* They are all true in accordance with the difference in the *Kalpa.* Gaṇeśa is the supreme deity. He bears many names—Gaṇeśa, Gaṇapati, Vināyaka, Sumukha, Ekadanta, Gaṇādhipa, Heramba, Lambodara, Vikaṭa, Dhūmraketu, Gajānana Vighneśa, Paraśupāṇi, Gajāsya,

Śūrpakarṇa, and Mūṣakadhvaja.

सूप-सरिस बड़ कान भक्त अनुकम्पा-कारक।
अच्युत, जगके हेतु, सृष्टिके आदि प्रवर्तक।।
प्रकृति पुरुष तैं परे ध्यान गनपति को करिहैं।
नसैं सकल तिनि बिघ्न अवसि भव-सागर तरिहैं।।
पाठ-हवन-पूजन करें पाप रहित होवैं भगत।
सब बिघ्ननि तैं छूटिकैं, लेहिं जनम्र नहिं पुनि जगत।।

"He has big-lobes like winnowing baskets. He is always merciful for His devotees. He is unfailing. He is the cause of the world and the first creator. The man, who contemplates Gaṇapati, the Supreme Truth over and above *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa,* will surely have all the obstacles removed and will definitely cross over the sea of the worldly existence. A devotee who recites the praises, offers oblations and worships Gaṇeśa becomes absolved of the sins and then being released from all the shackles, never takes birth in this world again."

—*Kalyan*

ब्रह्मादितृणपर्य्यन्तं सर्वं प्राकृतिकं जगत्।
सत्यं सत्यं विनामाञ्चमया शक्तिः प्रकाशिता॥
आविर्भूताच सा मत्तः सृष्टौ देवी मदिच्छया।
तिरोहिता च सा शेषे सृष्टिसंहरणे मयि॥
सृष्टिकर्त्री च प्रकृतिः सर्वेषां जननी परा।
मम तुल्या च मन्माया तेन नारायणी स्मृता॥

"Right from Brahmā to a blade of grass everything is made of *Prakṛti*. That *Prakṛti* is My Power manifested by Me but it is different from Me. It has emanated from Me at the beginning of creation. It came into being by My will. And at the time of dissolution of the universe it merges into Me and dissolves. Really speaking it is She who creates the universe and is the mother Supreme. It is My *Māyā* equal to Me in every respect, so it is named as *Nārāyaṇī Māyā*."

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (VII. 63—65)

Pañcadevopāsanā and Mahāvināyaka Temple of Orissa: A Bird's-eye View

—*Purna Chandra Ojha*

Pañcadevopāsanā or the worship of five deities has been prevailing in Orissa from time immemorial. The five deities viz., Gaṇeśa, Nārāyaṇa, Rudra, Ambikā and Bhāskara are worshipped in each and every rituals prescribed by the *Vedas, Purāṇas* and other holy scriptures of the Hindus. So the *Nārada Purāṇa* says—"गणेशादिपञ्चदेवताभ्यो नम:" (*Nārada Mahāpurāṇa*). The same thing has been mentioned in the *Śabdakalpadruma* like—

आदित्यं गणनाथं च महारुद्रं च केशवम्।
पञ्चदैवतमित्युक्तं सर्वकर्मसु पूजयेत्।।

All the holy Hindu-scriptures have unanimously accepted the non-difference of these five deities and also have propounded that if a person utters or remembers demurely the five names everyday remains free from all sins and gets atonement—

गणे नारायणे रुद्रे अम्बिके भास्करे तथा।
भिन्नाभिन्नं न कर्त्तव्यं पञ्चदेव नमोऽस्तु ते।।

Similarly—

गणेशभास्करबिष्णुशिवदुर्गा तथैव च।
पञ्चदेवं स्मरेन्नित्यं सर्वपातकदाहनम्।।

It is also markedly said that if a person having controlled his 'पञ्च इन्द्रिय' (five organs of sense viz., eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue) and remaining aloof from 'पञ्चमकार' (wine, fish, flesh, *Mudrā* and copulation) worships 'पञ्चदेव' (five deities viz., Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Durgā and the sun) with 'पञ्चपल्लव' (collections of sprouts of five trees viz., mango, holy fig, banyan, wavel-leaf and glamorous fig) in 'पञ्चपात्र' (five plates) and feeds 'पञ्चब्राह्मण' (atleast a number of five *Brāhmaṇas*) giving them 'पञ्चरत्न' (five gems viz., gold, diamond, pearl, ruby,

sapphire or coral) can gain 'पञ्चत्व' (happy death) being freed from 'पञ्चमहापातक' (the great five sins viz. 'ब्रह्महत्या' (murder of a Brahmin), 'चौर्य्य' (stealing), 'सुरापान' (drinking), 'गुरुपत्नीहरण वा गमन' (adultary with the wife of one's spiritual preceptor), 'तत्संसर्ग' (association with a man guilty of any of those offences).

The whole world consists of the five elements like the earth, the water, the fire, the air and the ether, and the five deities, in other way, represent these five elements. So, as the scriptures ordained, these five deities related or representing to these five elements are to be worshipped on each and every spiritual occasion. Supported by *Mantrayoga Saṁhitā* it is said—

मानवानां प्रकृतयः पञ्चधा परिकीर्तिताः।
यतो निरूप्यते सर्गः पञ्चभूतात्मकैर्बुधैः।।
भिन्ना यद्यपि भूतानां प्रकृतिः प्रकृतेर्वशात्।
तथापि पञ्चतत्त्वानामानुसारेण तत्त्ववित्।।
प्रत्यक्ततत्त्वप्राचुर्य्यं विमृश्य विधिपूर्वकम्।
उपासनाधिकारस्य पञ्चभेदमवर्णयत्।।

Gaṇeśa is stated as the lord of water as other four gods are the lords of other four elements—

आकाशस्याधिपो विष्णुरग्नेश्चैव महेश्वरी।
वायोः सूर्यः क्षितेरीशो जीवनस्य गणाधिपः।।

Some other scriptures mention in other form like 'क्षिति' is the origin of Durgā, 'जल' is of Gaṇeśa, 'तेजः' is of the sun, 'व्योम' is of Viṣṇu and 'मरुत्' is of Rudra. Anyway, Gaṇeśa is the lord of water, the first creation of the creator of the world for which He is worshipped first in every ritual. Water as the first creation is supported by Kālidāsa, the famous poet of the *Saṁskṛta* literature in his world famous drama 'अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तलम्' where it is said—"या सृष्टिः स्रष्टुराद्या....." Though Gaṇeśa is worshipped first in all rituals, still then there is no difference among these five deities as Lord Gaṇeśa Himself propounds in *Gaṇeśa Gītā* like—

शिवे विष्णौ च शक्तौ च सूर्ये मयि नराधिप।
अभेदबुद्धिर्योगः स सम्यग्योगो मतो मम।।

From the days of yore the land 'उत्कल' has been declared as the

pious land where many deities are worshipped. Here, we come across five main world famous temples related to five deities mentioned above. These five places governed and sovereigned by five deities are known as 'पञ्चक्षेत्र' like 'शैवक्षेत्र' (Bhubaneswar, where the Lord Śiva is worshipped), 'वैष्णवक्षेत्र' (Puri where Lord Jagannātha is worshipped), 'सौरक्षेत्र' (Koṇārka the temple of sun-god), 'शाक्तक्षेत्र' (Yājapur, here Goddess Virajā is worshipped) and 'गाणपत्यक्षेत्र' (Mahāvināyaka of Chandikhole where the five deities headed by Vināyaka-Gaṇeśa are worshipped). As Vināyaka-Gaṇeśa is the head of these deities, the temple is named after Him as Mahāvināyaka temple.

The hill Mahavina at Chandikhole of Cuttack district in Orissa which spreads seven kilometres in length, bears this beautiful temple in its lap. The king of Darpanagarha was a great devotee of Vināyaka and for this he had dedicated his life at the lotus feet of Him for which the temple of Mahāvināyaka flourished day by day and came to the eyes of the mass. From then it became one of the eminent and famous holy places of Orissa.

Some *Paṇḍitas* opine that this temple has been named after Śiva because Mahāvināyaka is an epithet of Him and the local people say that a spring found here flows from the mountain Kailasa *(Kapilāsa)* of Dhendanal district where Lord Kailāsapati Śiva resides.

We do not find any inscriptions or copper plates or any authentic materials to prove the antiquity of the temple. So history remains silent regarding the date of this famous temple. In the history of Orissa, some historians give there views that the temple might have been built by a Shaivite king whose name has not yet been traced out. Local legends prevail that as the worship is done here as per *Uḍḍāmareśvara Mahāmantra,* the temple might have been set up during the time of Keśarī dynasty and *Soma* races and particularly at the time of Yajāti Keśarī who established the temple of Goddess Virajā at Yājapur.

Five types of ceremonies are observed in different time of the

year since five deities are worshipped here. These five ceremonies relate to five deities like the 'महाविनायक व्रत' in 'गणेशचतुर्थी' (गणेश पूजा); the recitation of *Caṇḍī* is made and the 'दुर्गापूजा' is observed in 'दुर्गाष्टमी' of Dussehera festival; 'नारायण व्रत' is observed in 'दोलपूर्णिमा' and in the month of 'फाल्गुन' the 'शिवरात्रि' is observed in pomp and ceremony. On *Śivarātri* at midnight, a brass image of these five deities is circumambulated by the *Brāhmaṇas* and the circumambulation 'प्रदक्षिणा' is done thrice instead of seven times.

Here, in this temple, one of the peculiarities is found that all the devotees get the chance of *Darśana* of the deities always. There is no system of 'पहुड़' (sleeping time of God) here which is a general feature practised mostly in other temples.

When 'नैवेद्य' (oblation) is offered to the deities, only three plates are used instead of five plates: One plate to 'गणेश' and 'सूर्य'; the second one to 'शिव' and 'विष्णु' and the third one to 'दुर्गा'. Here 'अन्नभोग' is in practice and both the leaves of 'बिल्व' and 'तुलसी' are used in oblation.

This place is a good picnic spot. The temple is counted as one of the best holy places of Orissa and pilgrims from all over India make their gatherings here mostly during the five occasions mentioned above and people having the motive to hold picnic, side by side to have their visit of the temple at a time, swarm up in winter every year.

The people of Orissa are proud of themselves having owned to their credit such a rare, peculiar and beautiful temple which is not found elsewhere in India and in the world even.

"Coomarswamy attributes his reputation as 'Patron of Letters' to the double meaning of the word, *Gaṇa*, which, besides being the name of the followers of Śiva, is also the technical designation of early lists or collections of related works."

—*Gaṇeśa* (*Alice Getty*)

The Symbology of Gaṇeśa

—*Dr. Amulya Mohapatra*

In Hinduism the gods are eternal, undecaying and undying. Some gods are prominent in the *Vedas* and some in later Vedic literature, *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas.* The Vedic dictum 'Truth is one sages call it by different names'. This idea disproves the notion that Hinduism is polytheistic.

Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa says, there can be as many spiritual paths as there are spiritual aspirants. As one and the same water is called by different names by different people, some calling it water, some *Vāri,* some *Aqua,* and some *Pānī,* so one *Saccidānanda*— existence, intelligence-bliss. So God is one, but He is worshipped in different ages and climes under different names and aspects.

Thus the polytheism of the Hindus has remained a mysterious riddle. It will continue to remain so until it is viewed in the right perspective. There are three aspects of this polytheism. The three main cult deities—the trinity consisting of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva alongwith their consorts, form the first aspect. The other deities including Gaṇeśa are known as the second aspect. They represent limited manifestations of the Supreme God. The Vedic gods viz., Indra, Varuṇa, Agni and others form a class by themselves and so need separate treatment.

Out of all the Hindu deities, Gaṇeśa is known as the most popular one being worshipped by all sections of the Hindus. Gaṇapati is accepted by the Hindus as the son of Śiva and Pārvatī. Like other Hindu gods and goddesses Lord Gaṇeśa represents the rich symbology which is spiritually profound and significant.

Gaṇa means category. Everything that we perceive through our

senses or grasp through our mind, can be expressed in terms of kind, of category. The principle from which all such categories have manifested themselves is Gaṇapati, the lord of categories. In effect, it means the origin of the whole creation, God Himself.

A common *Saṁskṛta* word to denote elephant is, *Gaja*. Hence the name Gajānana or Gajamukha for Gaṇapati. But the word *Gaja* has much deeper connotation. *Ga* indicates *Gati,* the final goal towards which the entire creation is moving, whether knowingly or unknowingly. *Ja* stands for *Janma,* birth or origin. Hence *Gaja* signifies God from whom the worlds have come out and towards whom they are progressing to be ultimately dissolved in Him. The elephant head is thus purely symbolical and points to this truth. The elephant head stands for the macrocosm and the human body for the microcosm. The two form one unit. The *Vedantic* dictum of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad 'tat tvaṁ asi'* (That thou art) means you, the apparently limited individual, are in essence, the cosmic Truth, the Absolute. The elephant-human form of Gaṇapati is the iconographical representation of this *Vedantic* dictum. The elephant stands for the cosmic whereas the human stands for the individual.

Let us now try to interpret the other factors involved in this symbolical god. His ears are large enough to listen to the supplications of everyone, but like the winnowing basket, are capable of sifting what is good for the supplicant from what is not. Out of the two tusks, the one that is whole, stands for the truth, the one without second. The broken tusk which is imperfect, stands for the manifest world, which appears to be imperfect.

The bent trunk of Gaṇeśa is a representation of *Oṁkāra* or *Praṇava* which being the symbol of *Brahma,* the Absolute, is declaring as it were that Gaṇapati is *Brahma* Itself. His large belly indicates that all the created worlds are contained in Him.

The *Pāśa* (noose) stands for *Rāga* (attachment) and the *Aṅkuśa* (goad) for *Krodha* (anger). Like the noose, attachment binds us. Anger hurts us like the goad. If God is displeased with us, our attachment and anger will increase, making us miserable.

Lord Gaṇapati had chosen a small mouse as His vehicle. There is a symbolic explanation for this. The word *Mūṣaka* (mouse) is derived from the root *Muṣ* which means to steal. A mouse stealthily enters into things and destroys them from within. Similarly egoism enters unnoticed, into our minds and quietly destroys all our undertakings, only when it is controlled by divine wisdom, it can be harnessed to useful channels. The mouse also stands for the intellect since Gaṇapati is the lord of the intellect, with the power of celibacy.

The most commonly accepted form of Gaṇapati depicts Him as red in colour with a sacred thread, or a serpent. The red colour implies the *Karma* or action and the serpent too. A third eye may sometimes be added on the forehead of Lord Gaṇeśa. It is generally believed that the third eye of Gaṇeśa represents His capacity to see in the past, present and future. This third eye symbolizes the power of non-instrumental perception and action which are referred to in the *Vibhūtipāda* of *Yoga-Sūtra* of Patañjali.

In the limited context in which we are using the word, we may say that symbolism is the art by the help of which truths of religion and philosophy can be represented through forms, signs and stories.

As regards the symbolic significance of the Lord,the complexion of the skin, the smile on the face, the objects held in the hands, the manner in which the hand is raised, all these things have their meaning as well as the more concrete and prominent objects associated with the form.

The symbology of Lord Gaṇeśa as He is generally referred to, is the richest and the most profound in the whole field of Hindu symbolism. It involves practically every philosophical concept of the highest spiritual significance and occult truths relating to the innermost mysteries of life. These philosophical concepts or occult truths are represented by different objects and features associated with the both elephant and human forms which symbolizes Him. So multifarious are the functions and aspects of His nature that it is difficult to include all the symbols indicating them in one integrated image and in the common practice to include only a

few of these in one particular representation.

Gaṇapati is worshipped not only in images but also in *Yantras* (geometrical and mathematical diagrams) and *Kalaśas* (pots of water). The *Svastika* is also accepted as a graphic symbol of Gaṇapati. The *Kalaśa* represents life or the soul. Gaṇapati's consorts are *Ṛddhi* and *Siddhi* which represent personifications of the powers of success and prosperity.

Thus the truths hidden behind the symbols are so magnificent and of such depth that it enriches our conception and strengthens our devotion.

The sage Bharadwāja lived in Avantī. While performing some *Anuṣṭhāna* on the bank of the river, he happened to see a beautiful *Apsarā*. His semen fell on the earth and from that a boy was born red in colour. When the boy was seven, he inquired to the earth about his parents. The earth narrated whatever and how it happened. She took the boy to Bharadwāja and handed him over. Bharadwāja performed the necessary sacraments and taught him the *Vedas* and initiated him in *Gaṇeśa Mantra*. The boy muttering that six lettered *Mantra* practised severe penance for one thousand years. It was on the fourth day of dark fortnight in the month of *Māgha* and at the time of moon-rise Lord Gaṇapati appeared before him, granted boons desired by him. Lord Gaṇeśa addressed him as Bhauma—the son of Earth. He said—"Your name will be Maṅgala and since the hue of your body is red, you will be called Aṅgāraka and this particular day will be referred to as *Aṅgāraka Caturthī*. By adoring Me and propitiating on this day the *Sādhakas* will get all their desires fulfilled.

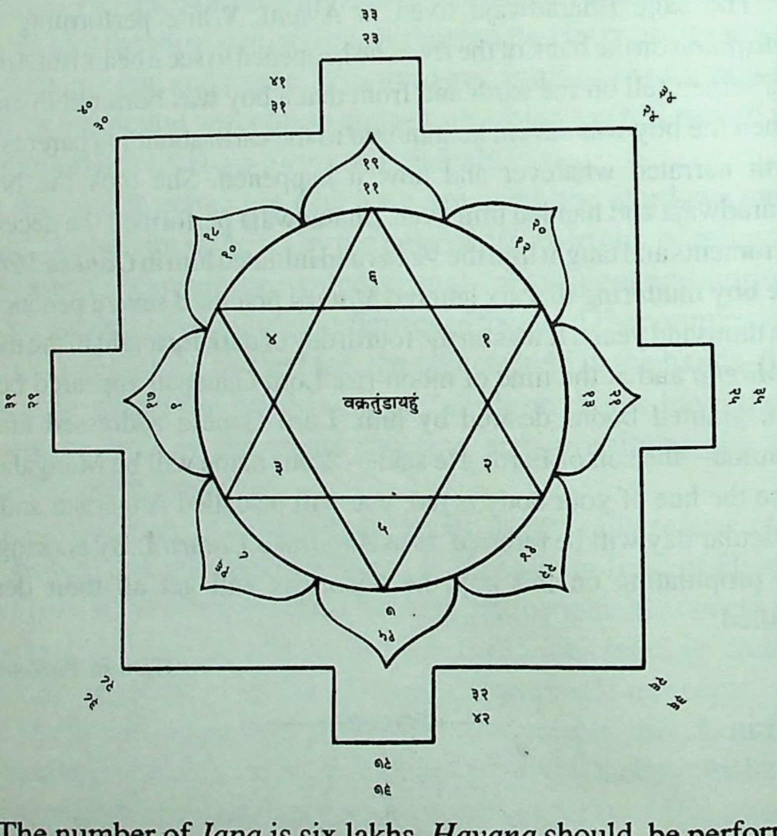
—*Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* (60)

Some Mantras for Various Aspects of Gaṇeśa and Their Application

Vakratuṇḍa Mantra—

(1) वक्रतुण्डाय हुं ।

Vakratuṇḍa Gaṇeśa Yantra



The number of *Japa* is six lakhs. *Havana* should be performed with eight articles as sugar-cane, parched barley powder, banana fruits, pounded paddy (*Cūḍā*), sesame seeds, *Modaka,* coconut fruit

and parched paddy. The number of *Havana* is one tenth of *Japa.* The *Japa* should start from the fourth day of any month and should continue for a month till the next *Caturthī* comes. *Japa* numbering to ten thousand should be performed everyday and every evening one hundred and eight *Āhutis* (oblations) should be poured in the sacrificial fire. If a *Sādhaka* does this way for six months continuously, he is expected to get desired result. It should be remembered that before starting *Japa* Vakratuṇḍa Gaṇeśa should be worshipped with necessary paraphernalia.

(2) Another *Mantra* is found in *Mantra Mahodadhi*—'मेधोलकाय स्वाहा'.

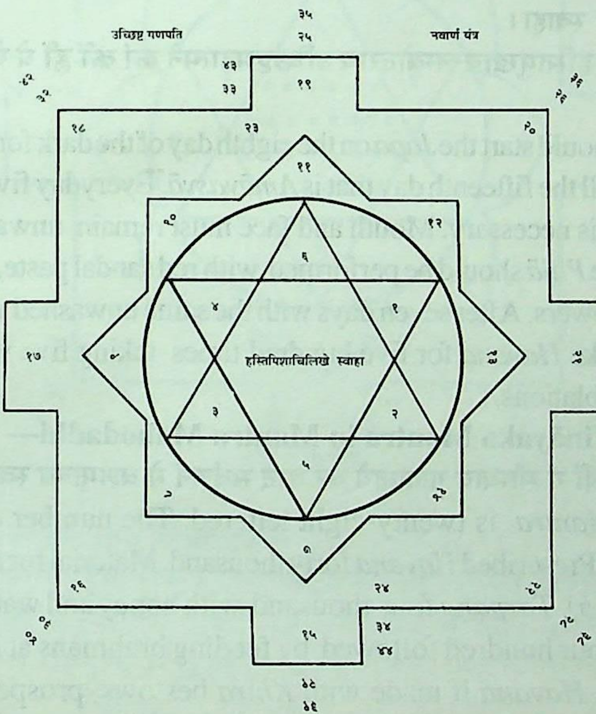
(3) रायस्योषस्य ददिता निधिदो रत्नधातुमान्। रक्षोहणोबलगहनोवक्रतुण्डाय हुं।

Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇapati Mantra—

According to *Mantra Mahodadhi*—

(1) हस्तिपिशाचिलिखे स्वाहा।

Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇapati Navārṇa Yantra



The number of *Japa* is sixteen thousand. The *Japa* should be

started on the fourth day of the dark fortnight and should be continued without break till the fourth day of bright fortnight. One thousand *Japa* should be made everyday. The deity should be bathed with honey. The *Japa* should be made while eating and with unwashed mouth. The material for *Havana* is *Apāmārga*. Oblations of *Apāmārga* one hundred and eight times everyday, in the end of the *Japa*, bestow prosperity. If a person makes a *Japa* for ten lakh times, he gets his destiny under his control and muttering for ten million times gets *Mahāsiddhis* like *Aṇimā* etc. He can even walk in the sky and become omniscient.

(2) ॐ ह्रीं गं हस्तिपिशाचिलिखे स्वाहा।

The number of *Japa* is one lakh times and one tenth of *Japa*, is the number of oblations in the fire with ghee.

(3) ॐ नमो भगवते एकदंष्ट्राय हस्तिमुखाय लम्बोदराय उच्छिष्टमहात्मने आं क्रों ह्रीं गं घे घे स्वाहा।

(4) ॐ नमो हस्तिमुखाय लम्बोदराय उच्छिष्टमहात्मने क्रां क्रीं ह्रीं घे घे उच्छिष्टाय स्वाहा।

One should start the *Japa* on the eighth day of the dark fortnight and continue till the fifteenth day that is *Amāvasyā*. Everyday five hundred *Japa* only is necessary. Mouth and face must remain unwashed after eating. The *Pūjā* should be performed with red sandal paste, unbroken rice and flowers. After seven days with the same unwashed mouth one should make *Havana* for five hundred times taking five varieties of food as oblations.

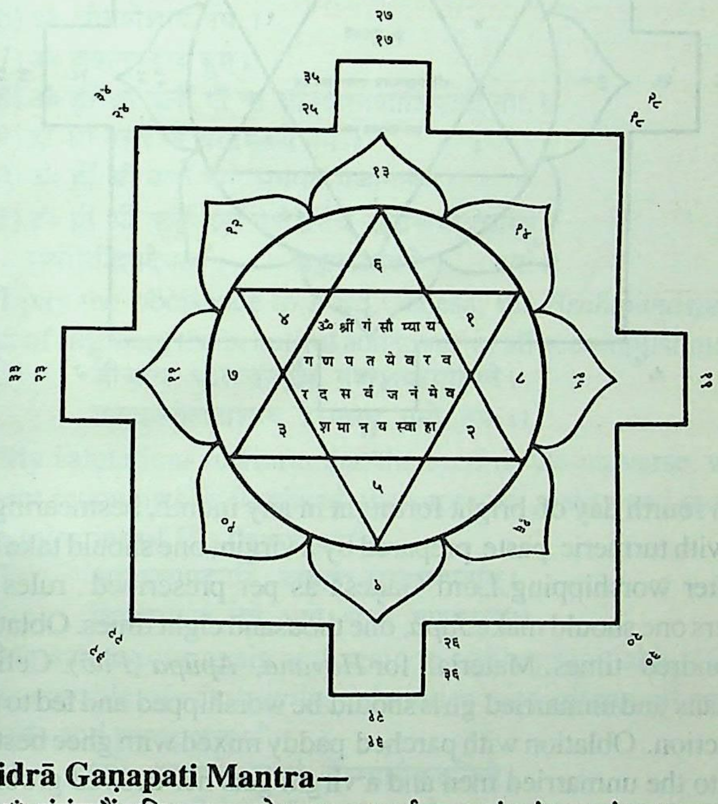
Lakṣmī Vināyaka Mantra in Mantra Mahodadhi—

ॐ श्रीं गं सौम्याय गणपतये वर वरद सर्वजनं मे वशमानय स्वाहा।

This *Mantra* is twenty-eight lettered. The number of *Japa* is four lakhs. Prescribed *Havana* forty thousand. Material for *Havana*—*Apūpa (Pūā)*, *Tarpaṇa* four thousand with honey and water mixed, *Mārjana* four hundred followed by feeding brahmans at least forty in number. *Havana* if made with *Khīra* bestows prosperity; with sugar-cane makes the man like a king; with ghee, salt and honey

gets wealthy. For having the perfection and command over the *Mantra,* oblations of *Bilva* (wood-apple), its fruit or twigs must be offered in the fire. If a *Sādhaka* performs the *Japa* standing in chest deep water or under the root of a *Bilva* tree even for three lakh times and pours oblations of *Bilva* twigs, he can get enormous wealth. If the *Havana* is made with *Aśoka*-wood with ghee and rice, he may be a darling of the whole world. It will be still more effective if the oblations are offered with a laddle made of *Madāra*-wood.

Lakṣmī Vināyaka Yantra

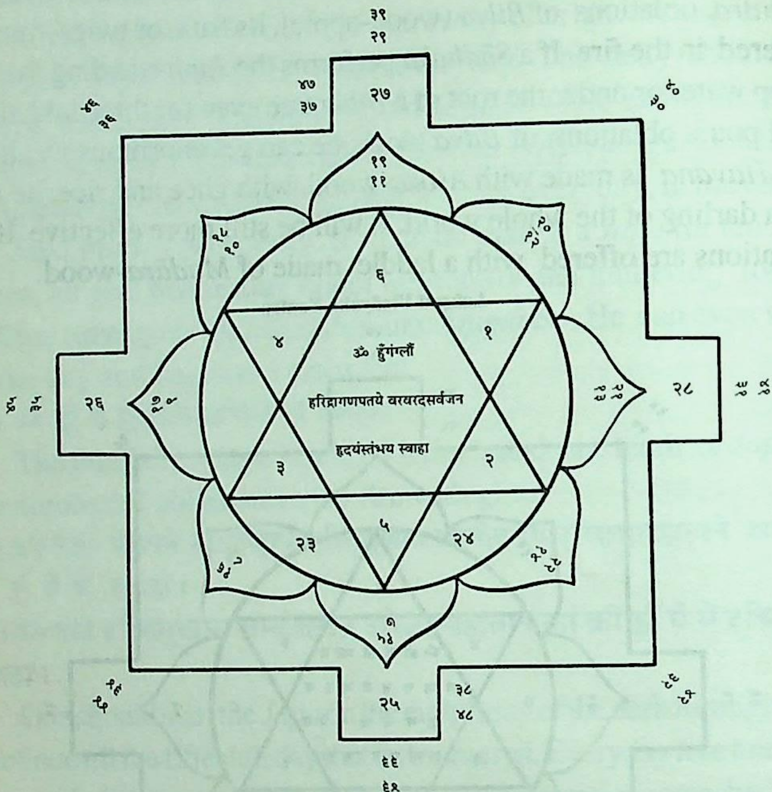


Haridrā Gaṇapati Mantra—

ॐ हुंगंग्लौं हरिद्रागणपतये वर वरद सर्वजनहृदयं स्तंभय स्तंभय स्वाहा।

This *Mantra* is thirty-two-lettered. Prescribed number of *Japa* four lakhs. Material for *Havana*—turmeric powder mixed with rice and ghee, *Tarpaṇa* forty thousand, *Mārjana* four thousand and feasting of brahmans.

Haridrā Gaṇeśa Yantra



On fourth day of bright fortnight in any month, besmearing the body with turmeric paste prepared by a virgin, one should take bath and after worshipping Lord Gaṇeśa as per prescribed rules and manners one should make *Japa,* one thousand eight times. Oblations one hundred times. Material for *Havana, Apūpa* (*Pūā*). Celibate brahmans and unmarried girls should be worshipped and fed to their satisfaction. Oblation with parched paddy mixed with ghee bestows bride to the unmarried men and a virgin gets her desired groom.

Performing the *Haridrā Gaṇeśa* worship as prescribed, a sterile lady can get a son. After the menstruation period is over and she has taken bath she should worship *Haridrā Gaṇeśa* and in cow-urine (five *Tolās* and four *Maśās*), she should prepare a paste of rock salt, *Vacā* (an aromatic root) and turmeric. She should make

a *Japa* one thousand times and take that paste as medicine and feed brahmans with *Modaka*. Doing this way she can have a worthy son.

A few other important and effective sacred formulas of Lord Gaṇeśa—

(1) ॐ ।

(2) ॐ गं ॐ।

(3) ॐ गं गणपतये नमः।

(4) ॐ नमो भगवते गजाननाय।

(5) श्रीगणेशाय नमः।

(6) ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः।

(7) ॐ वक्रतुण्डाय हुम्।

(8) ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं गौं गः श्रीन्महागणाधिपतये नमः।

(9) ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं गौं वरदमूर्तये नमः।

(10) ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं नमो भगवते गजाननाय।

(11) ॐ ह्रीं श्रीं क्लीं नमो गणेश्वराय ब्रह्मरूपायचारवे।
सर्वसिद्धिप्रदेयाय ब्रह्मणस्पतये नमः।।

"I pay my obeisance to Lord Gaṇeśa, the *Brahmaṇaspati* an aspect of *Brahma,* the beautiful and giver of all accomplishments."

(12) बीजाय भालचन्द्राय गणेशपरमात्मने।
प्रणतक्लेशनाशाय हेरम्बाय नमो नमः।।

"My salutations to Heramba, the seed of the universe, with a crescent moon on His forehead, the supreme reality and remover of the miseries of His devotees."

(13) आपदामपहर्तारं दातारं सुखसम्पदाम्।
क्षिप्रप्रासादनं देवं भूयो भूयो नमाम्यहम्।।

"My salutations again and again to easily propitiable Gaṇeśa who is capable of destroying calamities and giving all sorts of comforts and prosperity."

(14) नमो गणपते तुभ्यं हेरम्बायैकदन्तिने।
स्वानन्दवासिने तुभ्यं ब्रह्मणस्पतये नमः।।

"My salutations to You, O Lord Gaṇeśa, the *Brahmaṇaspati,* who is one-tusked and known as Heramba also, who always dwells in His own internal blissful mood."

(16) श्री गजानन जय गजानन जयजय गजानन।

(17) शुक्लाम्बरधरं देवं शशिसूर्यनिभाननम्।
प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत् सर्वविघ्नोपशान्तये।।

"All should meditate upon the God wearing white garments, whose face is glowing like moon and sun, who is always cheerful; for the removal of all obstacles."

(18) नमस्तस्मै गणेशाय ब्रह्मविद्याप्रदायिने।
यस्याऽगस्त्यायते नाम विघ्नसागरशोषणे।।

"Obeisance to Gaṇeśa, the giver of Supreme Knowledge *(Brahma-Vidyā)* and whose name is an Agastya in order to destroy the oceans of obstacles."

(19) ह्रीं गं ह्रीं गणपतये नमः।

(20) ॐ वक्रतुण्डाय नमः।

(*Vināyaka Purāṇa: Brahmāsādhita Mantra*)

(21) महाकर्णाय विद्महे वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि। तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्।।

(*Gaṇeśa Gāyatrī; Bhaviṣya Purāṇa Chapter 9*)

(22)
यद्भ्रूप्रणिहितां लक्ष्मीं लभन्ते भक्तकोटयः।।
स्वतन्त्रमेकं नेतारं विघ्नराजं नमाम्यहम्।।

"I bow to Gaṇeśa, the lord of obstructions, the leader of leaders, dependent on nobody else, one without a second, whose slanting movement of eyebrows provides plenty of wealth to the crores of His devotees."

लोकः समोऽपि हृदि विप्रियमन्यदन्तं
तूष्णीं दधत् प्रकटयेत्स्वमहाशयत्वम्।
इत्यादिशन्नुदधिशोभ्युदरादरेण
लम्बोदरः स भगवानवलम्बनं स्यात्।।

The pot-bellied Lord Gaṇeśa, instructing us through His large stomach—a gentleman should swallow the malicious activities of others done to harm him and exhibit his graciousness to them, be our resource.

Śiva and Gaṇeśa

—*R.C.M. Tripathi*

Before discussing the relation between Śiva and Gaṇeśa we should look into certain basic facts to make a thorough investigation. In *Saṁskṛta* there is a proverbial saying:'अतिपरिचयादवज्ञा'. Exactly the same case is with Lord Gaṇeśa. Every Hindu, wherever he may be, worships Lord Gaṇeśa without fail in the beginning of all undertakings. The expression 'Śrī Gaṇeśa' has become a synonym for beginning. Now let us have the basic facts analysed.

(1) Lord Gaṇeśa has taken birth from the mouth of the Lord Śiva, this is how the *Varāhapurāṇa* says.

(2) Mother goddess Pārvatī made an image of a child and infused life in it. And it became Lord Gaṇeśa. The antiquity of Gaṇeśa is quite debatable. It ranges right from several centuries B. C. to the Gupta period in the Indian history.

(3) Lord Gaṇeśa is the door-keeper of Lord Śiva.

(4) Lord Gaṇeśa is the door-keeper of Mother Pārvatī.

(5) Lord Gaṇeśa is a beloved child of Mother Pārvatī and she loves her darling child too much.

(6)We do not find any reference in the *Purāṇas* that Lord Śiva equally loves Gaṇeśa.

(7) On the contrary Lord Śiva cut off His throat.

(8) It was Lord Viṣṇu who transplanted the head of an elephant on His body.

(9) Śiva and Gaṇeśa both have got five-faces, three eyes, moon on the forehead and ornaments of serpents.

(10) Gaṇeśa and Śiva both have at least one common name *Tatpuruṣa.*

(11) We find that there was a Roman god Janus. *Oxford English Dictionary* while giving the meaning of the word—'January' says—"Janus the guardian god of doors and beginnings."

From the above mentioned points a picture emerges which is very interesting for the students of theological history. The striking resemblance in the form and function of Gaṇeśa and Janus compels us to think—was Gaṇeśa an intercontinental deity universally worshipped ? Were the two one and the same? If yes, it requires a very extensive research in the thick darkness of the time period which is perhaps unknown to the history. If no, it appears very intriguing how this similarity of function and even the name and phonetic arrangement of the two words Gaṇeśa and Janus was so similar. Both are door-keepers. Both are the gods of beginnings. If these two are one, in that case there cannot be any doubt that the worship of Gaṇeśa was existent at the dawn of civilization in the whole world right from East to the far West.

Antiquity—

We find a reference in *Taittirīya Āranyaka*—

तत्पुरुषाय विद्महे। वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि। तन्नोदन्ती प्रचोदयात्।

It is called *Gaṇeśa Gāyatrī* which in the later period underwent a slight change and 'तत्पुरुषाय' was substituted by 'एकदन्ताय'. In the *Rgveda* we find 'गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे'. In the *Yajurveda* we find 'गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे, प्रियाणाम् त्वा प्रियपतिं हवामहे' etc. Again in the *Śukla Yajurveda* we find 'नमो गणेभ्यो गणपतिभ्यश्च वो नमः'. Mahīdhara explains 'गण' as 'देवानुचराः भूत विशेषगणाः। गणानां बालकाः गणपतयः।'. It appears that according to *Śukla Yajurveda* Gaṇapati was just a heavenly portfolio because 'गणेभ्यः' and 'गणपतिभ्यः' are in plural number. So there is no wonder if these *Ganapatis* were just like group leaders in the modern armies. We find mentions of Ganeśa in the *Gāthāsaptaśatī* supposedly composed in the first century B.C. In the *Grhya Sūtras Vināyakas* appear. In the early religious literature these *Vināyakas* were evil deities and it was necessary to avoid them. Vināyaka is one of the names of Gaṇeśa. He is considered to be the lord of obstacles. Even though according to the common belief, He is only

the remover of obstructions yet He is even now not free from the dark side of Vināyaka. He creates also the obstructions when enraged. In the later period somehow Gaṇeśa managed to assimilate in Himself all these hosts and *Vināyakas.*

Let us consider how and why Lord Śiva cut the throat of Gaṇeśa and what is the secret behind the incident if any. According to the *Purāṇas*,while Mother goddess Pārvatī was in her bath and Gaṇeśa was keeping the door, Lord Śiva tried to enter the room. There was a clash between the two and not tolerating this outrageous behaviour of a door-keeper,Lord Śiva cut His throat.It was extremely repented by the Mother Pārvatī and she ordered her *Śaktis* to play havoc in the universe. So there was a great upheaval in all the three worlds and Brahmā and Viṣṇu intervened. Viṣṇu transplanted the elephant head on the body of the boy and enlivened Him. The Mother Pārvatī was somehow pacified to see her beloved child again. It was then that Brahmā sanctioned a boon for Gaṇeśa to receive foremost worship.

Now again Gaṇeśa was keeping the door while Lord Śiva was in a deep slumber. Paraśurāma appeared. He wanted to have a vision of the Lord. Gaṇeśa stopped him. Again there was a clash between the two and this time Paraśurāma hit Him with his axe and one of His tusks was broken. This way He became *Ekadanta.* These two happenings make one think if there was some struggle between the two cults of Śiva and Gaṇeśa. It is a historical fact that the worship of Lord Śiva went on spreading and worship of Gaṇeśa went on shrinking. It is also a fact that the foreworship of Gaṇeśa continued as it was. The popularisation of *Śaiva* and *Vaiṣṇava* conceptions could not make any adverse effect on Gaṇeśa-worship. One wonders if it was any sort of compromise between the rival deities.

There is a *Mantra* in the *Yajurveda* chapter 3, which hints to the identification of Lord Śiva with Gaṇeśa—

एष ते रुद्र भागः सह स्वस्रा अंबिकया।
तं जुषस्व स्वाहैष ते रुद्र भाग आखुस्ते पशुः।।

"O Rudra, this is Your share. Please enjoy it along with Your sister Ambikā. The mouse is Your animal."

Here in this *Mantra* we find two striking things.

(1) Ambikā who is now supposed to be the spouse of Lord Śiva was formerly described as His sister.

(2) The mouse which is the vehicle of Gaṇeśa was very closely related to Lord Śiva. As it has already been mentioned in the above paragraphs that there are certain striking similarities between Gaṇeśa and Śiva which point out to the identification and oneness of Śiva and Gaṇeśa. As it has been stated above that *Tatpuruṣa* was a common name to both of them and it is very important. Both have an axe in their hand, the five-faces, the moon on the forehead and the serpents are the common features of both of them.

According to *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* Lord Gaṇeśa takes incarnation in every *Yuga*. In the *Satyayuga* He was in the form of Vināyaka, the son of Kaśyapa having ten arms. In that age His vehicle was lion. He killed Devāntaka and Narāntaka and removed the burden of the earth. In the *Tretāyuga* He was known as Mayūreśvara, a son of Śiva having six arms and His vehicle was peacock. In the *Dwāpara* He was incarnated as the son of Śiva having the face of an elephant. His body was red like vermilion,had four arms and mouse as His vehicle. In that age He killed the demon named Sindūra and taught *Gītā* to His devotee Vareṇya. In *Kaliyuga* He will be known as Dhūmraketu. The body colour will be smoky, having two hands and will have horse as His vehicle.

In the end there is only one thing more to mention. It is bodily construction of Lord Gaṇeśa which looks like 'ॐ' in its appearance. That was a very important factor to establish Him in the form of Supreme Brahma or the *Praṇava*.

It is not intended to be a paper but just a small article to bring these points to the notice of historians and research students of Theological History. I will take my labour to be fruitful if it strikes a note of curiosity in their minds.

Why Lord Gaṇeśa is Worshipped First?

—*Prof. Dr. B. P.Verma 'Kamal'*

After having taken deep dive into the holy scriptures of the Hindus, it becomes evident that from time immemorial the Indians, especially the Hindus have been very keen and careful to adore and worship Lord Gaṇeśa first of all on all holy and auspicious occasions. In their opinion, Lord Gaṇeśa is the *Ādi Deva, Nirguṇa, Nirākāra, Nirīha, Aja, Para Brahma-Svarūpa, Vighna Nāśaka, Maṅgala Kartā and Siddhidātā* (original God, bereft of any *Guṇa* or shape, without any desire, unborn, Eternal God, destroyer of all sorts of disturbances and obstacles, doer of welfare and giver of success)—

अजं निर्विकल्पं निराकारमेकं
निरानंदमद्वैतमानन्दपूर्णम् ।
परं निर्गुणं निर्विशेषं निरीहं
परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजामि ।।

(*Gaṇeśa Purāṇa Upāsanā* XIII.3)

Not a single aspect of Indian society is left untouched with the system of worshipping Lord Gaṇeśa at the outset of any undertaking. Even Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa, being a devotee of Rāma, did not dare start writing of his books like *Rāmacaritamānasa* and *Vinaya Patrikā* without offering his first prayers to Lord Gaṇeśa. Even in *Saṁskṛta* and other Indian languages, the authors have been very alert to remember Lord Gaṇeśa before the commencement of writing their books. Not only that it has become customary to perform *Gaṇeśa Pūjā* and before starting construction of buildings, before performing marriage ceremony or any other *Saṁskāra*, before doing any sort of *Pūjā, Pāṭha, Havana, Kīrtana* or before

Here in this *Mantra* we find two striking things.

(1) Ambikā who is now supposed to be the spouse of Lord Śiva was formerly described as His sister.

(2) The mouse which is the vehicle of Gaṇeśa was very closely related to Lord Śiva. As it has already been mentioned in the above paragraphs that there are certain striking similarities between Gaṇeśa and Śiva which point out to the identification and oneness of Śiva and Gaṇeśa. As it has been stated above that *Tatpuruṣa* was a common name to both of them and it is very important. Both have an axe in their hand, the five-faces, the moon on the forehead and the serpents are the common features of both of them.

According to *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* Lord Gaṇeśa takes incarnation in every *Yuga*. In the *Satyayuga* He was in the form of Vināyaka, the son of Kaśyapa having ten arms. In that age His vehicle was lion. He killed Devāntaka and Narāntaka and removed the burden of the earth. In the *Tretāyuga* He was known as Mayūreśvara, a son of Śiva having six arms and His vehicle was peacock. In the *Dwāpara* He was incarnated as the son of Śiva having the face of an elephant. His body was red like vermilion, had four arms and mouse as His vehicle. In that age He killed the demon named Sindūra and taught *Gītā* to His devotee Vareṇya. In *Kaliyuga* He will be known as Dhūmraketu. The body colour will be smoky, having two hands and will have horse as His vehicle.

In the end there is only one thing more to mention. It is bodily construction of Lord Gaṇeśa which looks like 'ॐ' in its appearance. That was a very important factor to establish Him in the form of Supreme Brahma or the *Praṇava*.

It is not intended to be a paper but just a small article to bring these points to the notice of historians and research students of Theological History. I will take my labour to be fruitful if it strikes a note of curiosity in their minds.

Why Lord Gaṇeśa is Worshipped First?

—*Prof. Dr. B. P.Verma 'Kamal'*

After having taken deep dive into the holy scriptures of the Hindus, it becomes evident that from time immemorial the Indians, especially the Hindus have been very keen and careful to adore and worship Lord Gaṇeśa first of all on all holy and auspicious occasions. In their opinion, Lord Gaṇeśa is the *Ādi Deva, Nirguṇa, Nirākāra, Nirīha, Aja, Para Brahma-Svarūpa, Vighna Nāśaka, Maṅgala Kartā and Siddhidātā* (original God, bereft of any *Guṇa* or shape, without any desire, unborn, Eternal God, destroyer of all sorts of disturbances and obstacles, doer of welfare and giver of success)—

अजं निर्विकल्पं निराकारमेकं
निरानंदमद्वैतमानन्दपूर्णम् ।
परं निर्गुणं निर्विशेषं निरीहं
परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजामि ।।

(*Gaṇeśa Purāṇa Upāsanā* XIII.3)

Not a single aspect of Indian society is left untouched with the system of worshipping Lord Gaṇeśa at the outset of any undertaking. Even Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa, being a devotee of Rāma, did not dare start writing of his books like *Rāmacaritamānasa* and *Vinaya Patrikā* without offering his first prayers to Lord Gaṇeśa. Even in *Saṁskṛta* and other Indian languages, the authors have been very alert to remember Lord Gaṇeśa before the commencement of writing their books. Not only that it has become customary to perform *Gaṇeśa Pūjā* and before starting construction of buildings, before performing marriage ceremony or any other *Saṁskāra*, before doing any sort of *Pūjā, Pāṭha, Havana, Kīrtana* or before

taking any sort of adventure. Nobody either forgets to offer prayers to Lord Gaṇeśa while going on a *Yātrā* (tour or a trip). This system of Lord Gaṇeśa's *Agrapūjā* (fore-worship) has entered into the veins of Hindu way of life, so much so, that it has become proverbial to do 'Śrī Gaṇeśa' of a work just to denote that a work is going to be started.

In the Indian religious system, especially *Sanātana Dharma*, there are numerous gods and goddesses having different personalities and powers with different names, as—Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa, Gaṇeśa, Dineśa, Sureśa, Marudgaṇa, Varuṇa Deva, Śeṣa, Pañca-Deva. The nine planets, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Sītā, Rādhā, Gāyatrī, Sarasvatī, Lakṣmī, Pārvatī, Durgā, Kālī and so on and so forth. Now here the question arises as to why Lord Gaṇeśa was chosen to be given preference over other gods and goddesses and why He is worshipped first while performing any sort of *Anuṣṭhāna (Yajña* or function). While searching for an answer to this question, this also has to be looked into as to whence this practice started or originated.

According to one version, once upon a time, the gods themselves quarrelled over the issue of being Supreme to others. When they could not decide it, even after much deliberations and discussions, they resolved to authorise Lord Śiva to solve the deadlock. Lord Śiva, just to save Himself from being blamed for taking an arbitrary decision, very wisely asked the gods to start from a fixed point of place and time, make a round of the whole universe on their respective *Vāhanas* (vehicles) and come back to the place from where they had started. He, who comes first, would be judged to be the supreme and superior god and would get top priority in worship. All agreed and started to run a race.

As Lord Gaṇeśa had a mouse as His *Vāhana* (vehicle) His speed was naturally the slowest. If He followed the race, He was sure to be defeated. As He happens to be the god of wisdom (विद्या-बारिधि, बुद्धि-बिधाता), at once it flashed in His mind that His father Lord Śiva was the omnipresent god, who pervaded the whole universe.

He became confident that if He only made a round of His father, He would be fulfilling the condition and would be definitely declared first in the race. Accordingly He completed the round within no time and when other gods came back after giving a round of the universe much later, they were astonished to find Gaṇeśa as one who had arrived first. When Lord Śiva gave His verdict in favour of Lord Gaṇeśa, and explained to them the reason for His doing so, the gods had no option but to abide by the decision. It is from that time that Lord Gaṇeśa is worshipped first on all occasions of auspicious undertakings.

According to another version, Lord Gaṇeśa met *Devarṣi* Nārada on His way, who advised the former, a short-cut method to win the race. As Rāma pervaded the whole universe, the *Devarṣi* directed Him to write the name of Rāma on the earth and take a round of it. This would fulfil the condition and He was sure to be declared the winner. Lord Gaṇeśa did accordingly and the judgement went in His favour. *Goswāmī* Tulasīdāsa says—

महिमा जासु जान गनराऊ। प्रथम पूजिअत नाम प्रभाऊ॥

(*Mānasa* I. 18. 4)

i.e., Lord Gaṇeśa knew the value and importance of the name of Rāma and as such He was endowed with the Supremacy of being worshipped first on all occasions.

Here another question crops up. When Lord Gaṇeśa is the son of Lord Śiva and *Mātā* Pārvatī, how could He (Lord Gaṇeśa) have been worshipped in their marriage ceremony?

There are ample illustrations in the holy scriptures to answer this question and remove doubts from the minds of the devotees. It is universally accepted that God is *Anādi* (eternal). His creations are as well *Anādi* (eternal). Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa, Śeṣa, Gaṇeśa, etc., who are said to be the creators and controllers of this endless universe are all much more *Anādi* than this creation (*Brahmāṇḍa* or universe). During each *Kalpa* (a specific long period) they exist in *Anādi* (eternal) and *Ananta* form and according to needs, they become *Sākāra* (possessed of form) and take *Avatāra* (incarnation)

to lessen the burden of vices on this earth. As Lord Gaṇeśa is an *Anādi Deva* (eternal God), He already existed and pervaded the whole universe before He was born as the son of Lord Śiva and *Mātā* Pārvatī. In order to fulfil the desires of Lord Śiva and Pārvatī He (Lord Gaṇeśa) was born as their son, in the same way as the omnipresent Rāma took incarnation in human form and became son of Daśaratha and Kausalyā.

Devarṣi Nārada and the *Saptarṣis* had already supported the view that Lord Gaṇeśa was to be worshipped on all auspicious occasions to avoid any sort of obstacle and as such it was simply justified that Lord Gaṇeśa was worshipped in the marriage ceremony of Lord Śiva and Pārvatī.

There is yet another story in *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* to justify why Lord Gaṇeśa is worshipped first. It has been said that during the battle between Bhagavatī Śrī Mahāsundarī Lalitā and Bhaṇḍāsura demon, a very luminating god appeared out of the mild smile of Lalitāmbā. It had its head and mouth just like an elephant. The god thus produced, bowed down before Lalitāmbā. After having been blessed by Lalitāmbā, the elephant mouthed god destroyed the *Vighna Yantra* (obstacle figure) by a stroke of His tooth, which was fixed at one corner of the arena and defeated the giant's army. Being much pleased at the achievement of this elephant mouthed god, the empress Śrī Lalitā Devī blessed Him to be worshipped first among all the other gods and deities on all auspicious occasions—

विततार महाराज्ञी प्रीयमाणा गणेशितुः।
सर्वदैवतपूजायाः पूर्वपूज्यत्वमुत्तमम्॥

(*Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa,Lalitā,Uttara Khaṇḍa* XXVII. 104)

In the *Mudgala Purāṇa,* the gods have adored Lord Gaṇeśa as the ancestral family deity (कुलदेवता) of Lord Śiva, Viṣṇu and others—

स्वानन्दवासिने तुभ्यं शिवस्य कुलदैवत।
विष्ण्वादीनां विशेषेण कुलदेवाय ते नमः॥

From this point of view also it had become imperative on the part of Lord Śiva to worship Lord Gaṇeśa at the time of His marriage ceremony.

Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa had well apprehended about the doubts to be created in the minds of the devotees with regard to the propriety of worshipping Lord Gaṇeśa in the marriage ceremony of Lord Śiva especially in the circumstance when Lord Gaṇeśa is said to be the son of Lord Śiva. The *Goswāmī* has, therefore, clarified the situation in the following lines—

मुनि अनुसासन गनपतिहि पूजेउ संभु भवानि।
कोउ सुनि संसय करै जनि सुर अनादि जियँ जानि।।

(*Mānasa* I. 100)

i.e., Lord Gaṇeśa is an *Anādi Deva* (eternal God). Lord Śiva and Bhavānī worshipped Him in their marriage ceremony as directed by the *Munis* and *Ṛṣis* (saints and sages). So no one should have any doubt in ones mind with regard to the sequence of time and propriety of Gaṇeśa's worship before His birth (incarnation).

In the oldest Indian literature i.e., the *Vedas* Lord Gaṇeśa has been named as Gaṇapati and adored as the Supreme God. In the following *Mantra* of *Śukla Yajurveaa* (XVI. 25) He has been described as *Viśvarūpa* (full form of the whole universe) and indicated about His omnipresence—

नमो गणेभ्यो गणपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो व्रातेभ्यो व्रातपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो। नमो गृत्सेभ्यो गृत्सपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो विरूपेभ्यो विश्वरूपेभ्यश्च वो नमो।

Similarly, in the following *Mantra* of *Ṛgveda* (II. 23.1)—

गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे कविं कवीनामुपमश्रवस्तमम्।
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत आ नः शृण्वन्नूतिभिः सीद सादनम् ।।

and in the following *Mantra* of *Śukla Yajurveda* (XXIII.19)—

गणानां त्वा गणपतिँ हवामहे प्रियाणां त्वा प्रियपतिँ हवामहे।
निधीनां त्वा निधिपतिँ हवामहे वसो मम।
आहमजानि गर्भधमा त्वमजासि गर्भधम् ।।

and also in the various *Purāṇas* and other holy scriptures; here, there and everywhere, Lord Gaṇeśa has been adored as *Pūrṇa Parabrahma, Akhilātman,* the root cause of all the creations and *Swāmī* (Lord) of all the animate and inanimate objects of the world.

While introducing Himself to His devotee Vareṇya Lord Gaṇeśa has described Himself as the creator, administrator and

destroyer of the universe. He has further called Himself as Vidhātā, Mahā Viṣṇu, Sadā Śiva, Mahāśakti and the beloved sungod.

अहमेव जगद्यस्मात्सृजामि पालयामि च।
कृत्वा नानाविधं वेषं संहरामि स्वलीलया।।
अहमेव महाशक्तिरहमेवार्यमा प्रिय।

(*Gaṇeśa Purāṇa*—*Gaṇeśa Gītā* 21—23)

He has further described Himself as *Aja* (unborn) *Avyaya* (undiminished), *Sarvabhūtātmā* (Supreme Self), *Anādi* (beginningless) and by doing so, He has established Himself as *Parabrahma Paramātmā* (the Supreme God).

अजोऽव्ययोऽहं भूतात्मानादिरीश्वर एव च।

(*Ibid*. III. 9)

In the *Gaṇādhīśa Stotra* goddess Pārvatī and Lord Śiva have offered their prayers to Lord Gaṇeśa in both the *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa* forms and put forth reasons for His fore-worship (*Agrapūjā*) by calling Him as 'ज्येष्ठ' (eldest), 'ज्येष्ठराज' (oldest and seniormost) and as such, 'आदिपूज्य' (first to be worshipped)—

सगुणाय नमस्तुभ्यं ब्रह्मणे निर्गुणाय च।
आदिपूज्याय ज्येष्ठाय ज्येष्ठराजाय ते नमः।।

Śrīmad Ādi Śaṅkarācārya while offering his prayers to Lord Gaṇeśa has not only termed Him as Sureśvara, Nidhīśvara, Gajeśvara, Gaṇeśvara etc., but also named Him as Maheśvara (the great God) which is just equivalent to Mahādeva the Supreme God—

सुरेश्वरं निधीश्वरं गजेश्वरं गणेश्वरं।
महेश्वरं तमाश्रये परात्परं निरंतरम्।।

In *Gaṇapati Atharva Śīrṣa,* where by uttering 'त्वं ब्रह्मा, त्वं विष्णुः, त्वं रुद्रः' Lord Gaṇeśa has not only been described as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa, but also as the Supreme God—

त्वं प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मासि .... त्वं गुणत्रयातीतः।

To establish this view besides the above quoted statements, there are a lot of other scriptures like—*Mudgala Purāṇa, Gaṇeśa Purāṇa, Brahma Purāṇa, Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, Gaṇeśottara Tāpanīya Upaniṣad,* various *Stotras* (prayers) offered by *Maharṣi* Vālmīki, the *Devarṣi* etc., which may be consulted.

The most important aspect of Lord Gaṇeśa's *Agrapūjā* (fore-worship) is that He is *Vighnakara* (obstacle maker) and *Vighnahara* obstacle remover) at the same time. You just remember Him in difficulties and all the obstacles vanish in a moment, just as darkness disappears with the presence of the sun—

स जयति सिन्धुरवदनो देवो यत्पादपङ्कज स्मरणम्।
वासरमणिरिव तमसां राशिंनाशयति विघ्नानाम्।।

This fact has been established in the following *Śloka* of *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* also—

गणेशपूजने विघ्नो निर्मूलो जगतां भवेत्।

(*Gaṇapati* VI. 100)

It has been substantiated in *Gāṇapatyatharvaśīrṣa* as well by saying—"विघ्ननाशिने शिवसुताय वरदमूर्तये नम:".

It is the general experience of all concerned that if Lord Gaṇeśa is not worshipped at the outset while taking up any enterprise or performing any sort of ceremony, obstacles crop up on the way. To establish this truth, we may cite a story from *Śrīmad Bhāgavata.* It is said that while organising *Samudra Manthana* (stirring of the ocean) Lord Gaṇeśa was not worshipped by the organisors. This led to a series of difficulties in performing the task. The demons and the *Devas* at first were crushed under the *Mandarācala* (hill) while carrying it for the purpose and when after great efforts of Lord Viṣṇu, it was brought for installation, it sank down in the ocean (vide *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* VIII. 7. 8). It was again with the efforts of Lord Viṣṇu that it could be salvaged.

The *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* relates that while creating this universe, the *Caturānana* also forgot to worship Lord Gaṇeśa. Consequently he had also to face a series of obstacles in the process. He succeeded in his mission only when he realized his mistake and worshipped Lord Gaṇeśa.

Thus from the above treatise it is evident that Lord Gaṇeśa is no other than the unborn, omnipresent, all powerful and eternal God Himself and deserves *Agrapūjā* (fore-worship) on all counts and on all fronts. This fact has been established and supported by

all the relevant holy scriptures and *Ṛṣis, Maharṣis* (the great saints and sages) in unequivocal terms. However, no one can pin point the time in years, from when this practice began. It is simply eternal and is prevalent from time immemorial.

सूक्ष्मात् सूक्ष्मतमोऽव्यक्तः स्थूलात् स्थूलतमो महान्।
विश्वस्त्वं विश्वरूपश्च विश्वबीजं सनातनः॥
कार्य्यं त्वंकारणंत्वञ्चकारणानाञ्चकारणम्।
तेजः स्वरूपो भगवान्निराकारोनिराश्रयः॥
निर्लिप्तोनिर्गुणः साक्षीस्वात्मारामः परात्परः।
प्रकृतीशोविराड्बीजंविराड्रूपस्त्वमेव च।
सगुणस्त्वं प्राकृतिकः कलया सृष्टिहेतवे॥

"You are subtler than the subtlest, unmanifest and bigger than the biggest. You are the cosmos and the universe is Your manifested form and You are the eternal seed of the universe. You are the effect; You are the cause; You are the cause of the causes; You are the personified effulgence; You hold all kinds of glory; You are formless and without base; You are untainted, attributeless and the sole witness. You are contented within Yourself, Supreme and transcendental. You are lord of *Prakṛti*, the cosmic seed and having the cosmic form. In order to make creation You become embodied with a fraction of Yourself like other beings, product of nature."

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (VII. 111—113)

O Vināyaka, it behoves you to bestow equality with you, on those men and women who worship you on all occasions. O boy Gaṇeśvara, protect your devotees with all efforts. On being worshipped, here and hereafter protect old people and those who are in the prime of their youth. O Vighneśvara, O Gaṇeśvara, everywhere in the three worlds, you alone will undoubtedly become worthy of being worshipped and honoured.

—*Liṅga Purāṇa* (II. 105. 19—21)

Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇeśa Kavaca

The mother Goddess Pārvatī requested Lord Śiva to prescribe some measure, easy to adopt and which bestows desired results quickly. Lord Śiva preached her the *Kavaca* of Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇeśa which does not require much effort or trouble and only by the recitation provides accomplishment. One should recite the *Kavaca* in the solitude, in a forest, in a cave, on the bank of sea or the river Gaṅgā or under a tree or in the water or in a temple or in a holy place. Bathing or purificatory rites are not at all necessary. It removes all poverty within no time but it should not be given to an undeserving person, a cruel and a wicked person, to a disciple of somebody else, a killer, a deceitful person one who is a co-habiter with a brahman lady, a very sick person and one who feels animosity to his preceptor. To such persons this *Kavaca* should not be taught. If at all taught, it would never be fruitful. The *Kavaca* should be recited with unwashed mouth.

ऋषिर्मे गणकः पातु शिरसि च निरंतरम्।
त्राहि मां देवि गायत्रीछन्दो ऋषिः सदा मुखे।।

"The sage Gaṇaka may protect my head, the goddess Gāyatrī and the *Ṛṣi* of the *Gāyatrī* metre my face."

हृदये पातु मां नित्यमुच्छिष्टगणदेवता।
गुह्ये रक्षतु तद्बीजं स्वाहा शक्तिश्च पादयोः।।

"Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇeśa may protect my heart. His *Bīja* may protect my anus and the *Śakti Svāhā* my legs."

कामकीलकसर्वांगे विनियोगश्च सर्वदा।
पार्श्वद्वये सदा पातु स्वशक्तिं गणनायकः।।

"*Kāmakīlaka* and *Viniyoga* may protect all my limbs at all

times. Lord Gaṇanāyaka with His *Śakti* may protect my two sides."

शिखायां पातु तद्बीजं भ्रूमध्ये तारबीजकम्।
हस्तिवक्त्रश्च शिरसि लंबोदरो ललाटके।।

"His *Bīja* may protect my tuft and *Tārabīja* in between my eyebrows. *Hastivaktra* (elephant-faced) may protect my head and Lambodara my forehead."

उच्छिष्टो नेत्रयोः पातु कर्णौ पातु महात्मने।
पाशांकुशमहाबीजं नासिकायां च रक्षतु।।

"The Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇeśa may protect my eyes and *Mahātmā* Gaṇeśa my ears. His noose, goad and *Mahābīja* may protect my nostrils."

भूतीश्वरः परः पातु आस्यं जिह्वां स्वयंवपुः।
तद्बीजं पातु मां नित्यं ग्रीवायां कंठदेशके।।

"*Bhūtīśvara* (the lord of riches) may protect my mouth and *Svayamvapu* my tongue. His *Bīja* may always protect me in my neck and throat."

गंबीजं च तथा रक्षेत्तथा त्वग्रे च पृष्ठके।
सर्वकामश्च हृत् पातु पातु मां च करद्वये।।

"His *Bīja* 'गँ' may protect me from behind and the front. The god *Sarvakāma* may protect me in my two hands."

उच्छिष्टाय च हृदये वह्निबीजं तथोदरे।
मायाबीजं तथा कट्यां द्वौ ऊरू सिद्धिदायकः।।

"*Ucchiṣṭa* may protect my heart and the *Bīja* of fire-god (रं) may protect my stomach. The *Māyā Bīja* (ह्रीं) may protect my waist portion and *Siddhidātā* Gaṇeśa my two thighs."

जंघायां गणनाथश्च पादौ पातु विनायकः।
शिरसः पादपर्यंतमुच्छिष्टगणनायकः।।

"Gaṇanātha may protect my shins and Vināyaka my two legs. From head to the toes Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇeśa may protect me."

आपादमस्तकांतं च उमापुत्रश्च पातु माम्।
दिशोऽष्टौ च तथाकाशे पाताले विदिशाष्टके।।

"Gaṇeśa the son of Umā may protect me from the toes to the head, in the eight quarters, in the sky, *Pātāla* and in eight corner quarters."

अहर्निशं च मां पातु मदचंचललोचनः।
जलेऽनले च संग्रामे दुष्टकारागृहे वने॥

"Day and night the Lord Gaṇeśa (मदचञ्चललोचन) may protect me. In water, fire, battle-field, imprisonment, forest."

राजद्वारे घोरपथे पातु मां गणनायकः।
इदं तु कवचं गुह्यं मम वक्त्राद्विनिर्गतम्॥

"Gaṇanāyaka may protect me in the royal court and the dreadful path. Lord Śiva says—"This *Kavaca* emerged from My mouth."

त्रैलोक्ये सततं पातु द्विभुजश्च चतुर्भुजः।
बाह्यमभ्यंतरं पातु सिद्धिबुद्धिर्विनायकः॥

"Gaṇeśa may protect the devotee always in all the three worlds wherever he is, with His two armed and four armed forms. The Siddhibuddhi Vināyaka may protect my exterior and interior."

सर्वसिद्धिप्रदं देवि कवचमृद्धिसिद्धिदम्।
एकांते प्रजपेन्मंत्रं कवचं युक्तिसंयुतम्॥

"O *Devi*, this *Kavaca* is capable of giving *Ṛddhi, Siddhi* and all accomplishments. The *Sādhaka* must recite it in a lonely place."

इदं रहस्यं कवचमुच्छिष्टगणनायकम्।
सर्ववर्मसु देवेशि इदं कवचनायकम्॥

"This *Kavaca* of Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇeśa is a guarded secret. Among all the *Kavacas,* it is the best one."

एतत् कवचमाहात्म्यं वर्णितुं नैव शक्यते।
धर्म्मार्थकाममोक्षं च नानाफलप्रदं नृणाम्॥

"Its glory can never be described. One can have all the four ultimate goals of human life and the desired fruits of various kinds."

शिवपुत्रः सदा पातु पातु मां च सुरार्चितः।
गजाननः सदा पातु गणराजश्च पातु माम्॥

"The son of Śiva may always protect me. One who is worshipped by all the gods, may protect me. Gajānana may protect me and Gaṇarāja may protect me."

सदा शक्तिरतः पातु पातु मां कामविह्वलः।
सर्वाभरणभूषाढ्यः पातु मां सिंदुरार्चितः॥

"Always playing with His *Śakti* the Lord, may protect me. The Lord bedecked with all the ornaments and smeared with vermilion may protect me."

पंचमोदकरः पातु पातु मां पार्वतीसुतः।
पाशांकुशधरः पातु पातु मां च धनेश्वरः।।

"The bestower of five happiness (five *Makāras)* may protect me. The son of Pārvatī may protect me. The holder of noose and goad may protect me. The Lord of riches may protect me."

गदाधरः सदा पातु पातु मां काममोहितः।
नग्ननारीरतः पातु पातु मां च गणेश्वरः।।

"Gadādhara (having a mace in His hand) may protect me and the Lord amorously infatuated, may protect me. Gaṇeśvara may protect me."

अक्षयं वरदः पातु शक्तियुक्तः सदावतु।
भालचंद्रः सदा पातु नानारत्नविभूषितः।।

"The boon-giver Gaṇeśa accompanied by His *Śakti,* may always protect me. Bhālacandra (having crescent moon on His forehead) adorned with several precious gems, may protect me."

उच्छिष्टगणनाथश्च मदाघूर्णितलोचनः।
नारीयोनिरसास्वादं पातु मां गजकर्णकः।।

"Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇeśa whose eyes are rolling with the effect of intoxication and who has ears like that of elephant may protect me."

प्रसन्नवदनः पातु पातु मां भगवल्लभः।
जटाधरः सदा पातु पातु मां च किरीटिकः।।

"The God with a cheerful face and having all the six qualities may protect me. Jaṭādhara (having matted hairs) may always protect me and the God wearing diadem on His head may protect me."

पद्मासनस्थितः पातु रक्तवर्णश्च पातु माम्।
नग्नसामपदोन्मत्तः पातु मां गणदैवतः।।

"The God sitting in a lotus-like posture *(Padmāsana)* may protect me and one having a blood-red hue of His body may protect me. Gaṇadevatā absorbed in enjoying the chanting of *Sāma* may protect me."

वामांगे सुंदरीयुक्तः पातु मां मन्मथप्रभुः।
क्षेत्रपः पिशितं पातु पातु मां श्रुतिपाठकः।।

"Having His lovely spouse on His left side the God of cupidity may protect me. *Kṣetrapa* may protect the flesh in my body and the reader of the *Vedas* may protect me always."

भूषणाढ्यस्तु मां पातु नानाभोगसमन्वितः।
स्मिताननः सदा पातु श्रीगणेशकुलान्वितः।।

"The God ornamented and enjoying all sorts of enjoyables may protect me. The Lord Gaṇeśa with His smiling face, accompanied by *Kula* may protect me."

श्रीरक्तचंदनमयः सुलक्षणगणेश्वरः।
श्वेतार्कगणनाथश्च हरिद्रागंणनायकः।।

"Lord Gaṇeśa, having all auspicious signs, besmeared with red sandal paste, may protect me. Gaṇeśa as found in the roots of white *Mandāra* may protect me. Haridrā Gaṇeśa may protect me."

पारभद्रगणेशश्च पातु सप्तगणेश्वरः।
प्रवालकगणाध्यक्षो गजदंतो गणेश्वरः।।

"Pārabhadra Gaṇeśa and the lord of seven *Gaṇas* may protect me. Gaṇeśa presiding over the gems such as coral, and elephant-tusked may protect me."

हरबीजगणेशश्च भद्राक्षगणनायकः।
दिव्यौषधि समुद्भूतो गणेशश्चिंतितप्रदः।।

"Harabīja Gaṇeśa and Bhadrākṣa Gaṇeśa may protect me. Gaṇeśa born of divine herbs and fulfiller of the desires, may protect me."

लवणस्य गणाध्यक्षो मृत्तिकागणनायकः।
तंडुलाक्षगणाध्यक्षो गोमयश्च गणेश्वरः।।

"Lord Gaṇeśa of salts and earth, may protect me. Gaṇeśa the lord of rice, *Rudrākṣa* and cowdung may protect me."

स्फटिकाक्षगणाध्यक्षो रुद्राक्षगणदैवतः।
नवरत्नगणेशश्च आदिदेवो गणेश्वरः।।

"Gaṇeśa presiding over crystal beads and Gaṇeśa presiding over *Rudrākṣa* may protect me. Gaṇeśa of nine gems and the first primordial God may protect me."

पञ्चाननश्चतुर्वक्त्रः षडाननगणेश्वरः।
मयूरवाहनः पातु पातु मां मूषकासनः।।

"Gaṇeśa having four faces, five faces and six faces, having peacock as His vehicle, may protect me. Gaṇeśa seated over the mouse may protect me."

पातु मां देवदेवेशः पातु मामृषिपूजितः।
पातु मां सर्वदा देवो देवदानवपूजितः।।

"Gaṇeśa, the God of gods and worshipped by the sages, may protect me. The Lord worshipped by gods as well as demons may protect me."

त्रैलोक्यपूजितो देवः पातु मां च विभुः प्रभुः।
रंगस्थं च सदा पातु सागरस्थं सदाऽवतु।।

"The Lord omnipresent and omnipotent, worshipped by all the three worlds, may protect me whether I am on a colourful stage or in an ocean."

भूमिस्थं च सदा पातु पातालस्थं च पातु माम्।
अंतरिक्षे सदा पातु आकाशस्थं सदावतु।।

"Whether I may stay on the earth or in *Pātāla,* the Lord may protect me. While I am in ether or in sky, the Lord Gaṇeśa may always protect me."

चतुःष्पथे सदा पातु त्रिपथस्थं च पातु माम्।
बिल्वस्थं च वनस्थं च पातु मां सर्वतस्तनम्।।

"When I am on a cross-road point, where four paths or three paths conjoin, the Lord may protect me. Whether I am on or underneath, a *Bilva*-tree or in the forest, the Lord Gaṇeśa may protect me from all sides."

राजद्वारस्थितं पातु पातु मां शीघ्रसिद्धिदः।
भवानीपूजितः पातु ब्रह्मविष्णु शिवार्चितः।।

"Gaṇeśa may protect me while I am at the royal gate. One who quickly provides all accomplishments, may protect me. Gaṇeśa worshipped by goddess Pārvatī may protect me. Gaṇeśa worshipped by Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, may protect me."

As Lord Śiva narrated to the mother goddess, this *Kavaca* can

fulfil any desire whatsoever. By reciting this *Kavaca,* one can amass wealth or defeat the formidable foes. Nothing is impossible if Lord Vināyaka is propitiated.

—*Mantra Mahārṇava* (14—50)

क्षीरोदं पौर्णमासीशशधर इव यः प्रस्फुरन्निस्तरङ्गं
चिद्व्योमस्फारनादं रुचिविसरलसद्बिन्दुवक्रोर्मिमालम्।
आद्यस्पन्दस्वरूपः प्रथयति सकृदोङ्कारशुण्डः क्रियादृग्
दन्त्यास्योऽयं हठाद्वः शमयतु दुरितं शक्तिजन्मा गणेशः॥

Just as the full moon makes the pacific milky-ocean annoyed to some extent that there arise very high waves with a roaring sound in it, similarly he who is fully illumined himself, by spreading *Nāda* element in the ether-like consciousness which was waveless so far, makes the curly waves of *Bindu Tattva* appear and make the ocean of consciousness perturbed; who appears in the form of the first vibration of Sound Absolute (शब्दब्रह्म); whose trunk is *Oṅkāra* and who is the chief witness of all activities; that Gajānana the darling son of Śakti, may remove the sins and miseries of you all.

—*Cidgaganacandrikā* (I. 1)

The image of Lord Gaṇeśa has been built of *Oṅkāra* which is as follows—the first portion of *Oṅkāra* that is the belly of Lord Gaṇeśa, the middle portion is *Daṇḍa* that is his trunk; the upper portion—the crescent moon that is his tusk and the *Anusvāra* (the nasal dot) is *Modaka.* There is another form of Gaṇeśa popularly known as *Svastika.* It is a symbol more than a form. The four arms of the *Svastika* represent the four arms of Lord Gaṇeśa. Pāṇini the famous *Saṁskṛta* grammarian in his aphorism (VIII. 2. 87) says that 'ओ' of the 'ओम्' must be pronounced in 'प्लुत' having three *Mātrās.* This 'प्लुत' vowel is his vehicle, the rat. Taking these facts into consideration the form of Gaṇeśa image has been idealised.

—*Compiled*

Śrī Gaṇeśa

—*Rai Krishnadasa*

Almost all the Hindus offer obeisance to Gaṇeśa in the beginning of every auspicious occasion. It is so customary as the phrase 'to do Śrīgaṇeśa' has come to be used as a common proverb. The first prayer is offered to Gaṇeśa with the purpose of achieving the completion of the act without any obstacles. The worship of Gaṇeśa is confined not to India but it was widespread and is still in vogue in the countries of greater India, viz., Nepal, Sino-Turkey, Java, Bali, Borneo, Tibet, Burma, Siam, China, Indo-China and even in Japan.

According to the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa,* Gaṇeśa's head was severed a short time after his birth by the cursed cruel glance of Śanaiścara. Viṣṇu, however, cut the head of an elephant and fixed it on the headless body of Gaṇeśa and thus he received the nomenclature of Gajānana. According to the same *Purāṇa,* once Paraśurāma visited Kailasa to see Śiva and Pārvatī. At that time, the Lord Śiva and Pārvatī were asleep and Gaṇeśa who was keeping watch, forbade Paraśurāma from proceeding to Him. Then followed a quarrel between them at the end of which Paraśurāma cut down one of the tusks of Gaṇeśa with his axe. Gaṇeśa is therefore, *Ekadanta* or one-tusked. The poet Māgha, however, tells us that Gaṇeśa's one tusk was uprooted by Rāvaṇa. In connection with the birth of Gaṇeśa another folk-lore too is widely popular. According to this, once when Pārvatī had proceeded for ablution, she felt boring and just to pass the time she created with the unguent which she had taken along with her for smearing her body with,an idol of a child having the face of an elephant. She subsequently infused life into it and thus Gaṇeśa came into existence.

Among the tales associated with Gaṇeśa one tells that he undertook the task of scribing the *Mahābhārata.* When the sage Vedavyāsa had planned for writing the *Mahābhārata* he was worried for a suitable scribe. Brahmā counselled him to seek the assistance of Gaṇeśa, who agreed to undertake the work of scribing with the condition that he would desist from scribing at the very moment when Vyāsa would stop. Whereupon Vyāsa accepted this condition with the modification that Gaṇeśa would scribe down only after having understood the meaning. Whenever Vyāsa required to stop he would speak *Ślokas* containing riddles. Gaṇeśa then had to pause to understand the purport of those *Ślokas* and this provided time enough to Vyāsa for composing several verses meanwhile.

Gaṇeśa is considered as the endower of learning and talent. In this form too he has been extensively praised. The Vedic Bṛhaspati also is the deity presiding over intellect. Of the weapons of Śrī Gaṇeśa the *Paraśu* or axe enjoys the prominence and Gaṇapati is also one of his many names.

Various ways and rites of Gaṇeśa's worship are met with in the sect of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism as well as in the *Tantras.* Out of the numerous *Cakras* (circles) conceived in the *Haṭhayoga* as operating in the body, the *Mulādhāra* or *Gudā Cakra* has Gaṇeśa as its deity.

Among the Buddhists, the white elephant is regarded to be very sacred and adorable. They have a fable according to which Māyādevī, the mother of the Buddha saw in her dream a white elephant descending from the heaven and entering in to her mouth. She subsequently bore Buddha in her womb. The white elephant has therefore come to be looked upon as the symbol of Buddha. It is for this reason that at many places the image of the white elephant finds place in the religious edicts of Aśoka. On the top of Aśoka's Kalasi-inscriptions the image of this elephant has been engraved with the epithet *Gajatamo* (the best elephant) written under it. Likewise in the Dhauli edict half of the image of an elephant has been engraved in the very beginning. In this religious

writing the sixth edict contains the word *Seto (Śvetaḥ)* at its end. In the *Dharmalipi* of Girnar the following words are engraved under the thirteenth edict *"śveto hastī sarvalokasukhāharo nāma"* i.e., the white elephant which bestows happiness on all the worlds. Besides this, the fourth edict in his *Dharmalipi* refers to the custom that the arrangements were made for the public to have a look on the elephants with religious feelings. We find the reference to the elephant-shape of Gaṇeśa in the aforesaid elephant-worship of the Buddhists. This view further gains strength from the fact that Vināyaka and Gaṇaśreṣṭha are also the names of Buddha.

The oldest image of Gaṇeśa found so far, is that of Bhumara (Nagoda in Madhya Pradesh). This image possesses two arms. In the Hindu temples of Java, too, very attractive images of Gaṇeśa have been found. In the images of Gaṇeśa, the head of an elephant with one tusk, corpulent belly, hideous and dwarfish form and the sacred thread of the serpent are universally met with. Similarly the *Aṅkuśa* i.e., (goad) amongst his weapons, is found in almost all the images. *Modaka* (sweet ball) is his favourite food. Gaṇeśa is meditated in a form bearing four to eight or even more arms. In the forms of these meditations Gaṇeśa is contemplated in any of the postures sitting, standing or dancing. Just as in the case of Śiva so in the case of His beloved son Gaṇeśa, we often find description of evening dance *(Sāndhya Nṛtya)*. Although his vehicle is *Mūṣaka* (mouse) yet references in the *Tantras* to his numerous other vehicles also are found. Gaṇeśa's images are mostly found with one face. In India—now in Bangla Desh—a five-faced image of Gaṇeśa has been discovered at Munshiganj, Dhaka, and another image is seen at Kashi near Ḍhuṇḍhirāja Gaṇeśa. In Nepal, however, the worship of five-faced Gaṇeśa is popular by the name Heramba. Numerous images of Gaṇeśa and forms of Tantric meditations are also found accompanied with their *Śaktis* or powers. At some places the images of Gaṇeśa's *Śakti* alone are also found. In these images the entire figure is that of Gaṇeśa, but the breasts are that of a woman. At places we find the image of Gaṇeśa lying as a child

in the lap of Pārvatī. The artists of Rājapūta style almost invariably paint Gaṇeśa along with his *Śakti Siddhi* and Buddhi which are painted on both the sides.

There is an image of dancing Gaṇeśa belonging to the medieval age (tenth to twelfth century) in the Bhārata Kalā Bhavana, the museum of *Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā*. The image is made of Chunar stone. It is 24 1/4 inches high, 14 1/2 wide and 4 1/2 inches thick. The appearance of Gaṇeśa in this image is emotional. The joy produced by his dancing is quite apparent from his face and the whole of his appearance tends to bestow happiness and blessing. His threefold crooked posture and footsteps falling with the rhythm or *Tāla* have been finely shown. This image is eight-armed and the hands hold in order from the right to left (1) the corn-ear of paddy grains (*Vrīhi),* (2) the *Paraśu* or axe, (3) The *Japamālā* or the rosary of beads (4, 5) *Nāgapāśa* in the upper two hands, (6) His own broken tooth, (7) *Modaka* or sweet-ball and (8) The ears of paddy grains (*Vrīhi*) again. In the forms described for meditation, Gaṇeśa has been said to bear the complexion of vermilion, besmeared as he is with red lead. Forms of meditation in other colours also are met with.

—*Kalyana*

In the scriptures there are different forms of Lord Gaṇeśa with different aspects and colours prescribed. They are as under—

"A *Sādhaka* should meditate upon the yellow-coloured Gaṇeśa for stupefying purposes. The red Gaṇeśa for bringing some persons or powers under control, the black Gaṇeśa for causing death, smoke-coloured Gaṇeśa for mentally distracting a person. He should meditate upon Gaṇeśa of *Bandhūka*-red colour for attracting and strengthening, a green Gaṇeśa for wealth and a white Gaṇeśa for final emancipation."

—*Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣopaniṣad*

Lord Gaṇeśa–A Deity Extraordinary

—R. P. Dwivedi

Of all the deities of the Hindu panthe on—both Vedic and Puranic Lord Gaṇeśa occupies a unique place of prestige in our religion, culture and hoary heritage. Lord Gaṇeśa is a distinguished deity par excellence in many respects. It is nigh impossible to find His parallel in the galaxy of gods and goddesses in any religion of the world. He is indeed matchless and deserves a special esteem in the minds and hearts of millions of Hindus all over the world. In fact, this popular elephant-faced deity of the Hindus has intrigued all thinking men all through the ages down to the present day. They wonder why this funny looking deity has been accorded such an eminent status in our pantheon.

Wheresoever we may go in our country, we will find His images in temples, holy places, thoroughfares, public parks, pavements, bathing ghats and even on hilltops. Besides India, Lord Gaṇeśa's idols and images are also found in almost all countries in the South East Asia and in China, Japan, Mexico and even in USA, where a temple to Lord Gaṇeśa was recently consecrated at Flushing, a suburb of New York. The sweeping wave of deep devotion to Lord Gaṇeśa in India and abroad has not abated in these days of free thinking and rationalism. His grace is invoked by all classes of Hindus in all walks of life the world over.

The grotesque figure and enigmatic character of this highly popular Hindu deity has always generated much debate and research which have led to many unknown, revealing and even astonishing facts about Lord Gaṇeśa. This article is a modest attempt at highlighting some of the distinctive aspects of Lord

Gaṇeśa's life and also His peculiar traits for a better understanding of our readers.

Myths about Lord Gaṇeśa's Birth—

Like the other illustrious aspects of His life, Lord Gaṇeśa is also unique in birth. Unlike other normal children Lord Gaṇeśa had a peculiar kind of birth. There are many interesting myths in our scriptures as to how Lord Gaṇeśa was born or created or how He came into existence. One such story, according to *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* (chapter VII) goes like this. It was after observing a great deal of austerity and penances that goddess Pārvatī and Lord Śiva were blessed with a lovely son. Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself appeared and gave the boon of a son to goddess Pārvatī. On the child's birth a grand function was organised and all the important gods and goddesses were cordially invited to attend it and bless the new born babe. In the presence of various deities *Śanaiścara* (Saturn), the son of sungod appeared on the scene and after offering his salutations to Lord Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva, sought permission to enter goddess Pārvatī's inner apartments to bless the child. But he stood there with downcast face looking down at the ground. Goddess Pārvatī then asked him why he did not see and bless the child.

कथमानम्रवक्त्रस्त्वं श्रोतुमिच्छामि साम्प्रतम्।
किं न पश्यसि मां साधो बालकं वा ग्रहेश्वर।।

(Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa Gaṇeśa Khaṇḍa)

Śanaiścara (Saturn) thereupon informed her that as per the curse given to him by his own wife, his glance would cut off the head of whosoever was looked straight or stared at by him. Goddess Pārvatī did not accept this version and requested him to look at her son without any fear whatsoever. Saturn still hesitated, but on Pārvatī's insistence, he had but to comply with her instructions. But no sooner did Saturn cast his obligue glance at the child's face, than the latter's head got instantly chopped off and it disappeared to merge into Lord Kṛṣṇa.

सव्य लोचनकोणेन ददर्श च शिशोर्मुखम्।
शनैश्चरदृष्टिमात्रेण चिच्छेद मस्तकं मुने।।
विवेश मस्तकं कृष्णे गत्वा गोलोकमीप्सितम्।।

(*Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*)

Now goddess Pārvatī's sorrow knew no bounds and she fell unconscious. All the deities assembled there,got bewildered. When the situation grew from bad to worse, Lord Viṣṇu set out in search of a child's head. As He was searching for a child's head in a forest He found that an elephant's mother was sound asleep on the bank of river Puṣpabhadrā with her young one lying far away from her. Lord Viṣṇu cut the young elephant's head off with His disc (*Sudarśana Cakra*), put it on His mount Garuḍa and brought it to goddess Pārvatī, who was lying restless lamenting the loss of her son. Lord Viṣṇu then transplanted the young elephant's head on the headless child Gaṇeśa who immediately came back to life with a loud roar. The child bowed low in reverence to His mother and was profusely blessed by her.

Another interesting myth regarding the creation of Lord Gaṇeśa is narrated with slight variation of details. Goddess Pārvatī sometimes felt annoyed at the too many intrusions of her divine consort Lord Śiva into her private apartments in her harem at the palace on mount Kailasa. She therefore posted the bull-headed Nandī—an attendant of Lord Śiva at the gate with strict instructions not to let anybody in without her prior permission. A little later, Lord Śiva came there and insisted on entering His consort Pārvatī's inner chamber. Nandī could not prevent His master's entry and finally let Him in. Goddess Pārvatī, though courteous to her Lord, grew furious at Nandī for violating her instructions. Lord Śiva got amused at her annoyance and left the palace to allow matters to settle down. Even after the withdrawal of Nandī, goddess Pārvatī was not happy with the other guards because they too were rather a source of nuisance to her privacy. Her maid servant also advised her to have her own personal attendant who could obey her orders in letter and spirit. She agreed to this suggestion. Once, while she

was seated in her private apartment and her maid servants were applying sandal paste all over her body as a preliminary step leading to bath, she decided to create her own personal attendant. She therefore collected all the scented unguent from her body and moulded it into the figure of a small boy. Then, by her own will, she breathed life into the image. After coming into life the child Gaṇeśa paid respect to His mother and requested her to pass any orders for His compliance. She hugged Him lovingly and presenting Him with a staff posted Him at her palace gate with specific orders not to let anyone in under any circumstances without her permission. A few minutes later, Lord Śiva came at the gate with His attendants and tried to get in. The boy cried halt at which Lord Śiva flew into fury at this affront and pushed Him out of His way. The boy dealt a heavy blow on Lord Śiva with His staff and the situation grew very awkward. Lord Śiva's attendants were also bewildered. At last, Lord Śiva was enraged beyond measure at the small boy's audacity and foolhardiness and severed the child's head with His trident (त्रिशूल). The situation, which was already bad grew worse. Goddess Pārvatī decried this act of cruelty on the part of her consort and grew utterly inconsolable. Lord Śiva realised His mistake and began to repent. When Lord Brahmā and Viṣṇu approached goddess Pārvatī for a solution, she dictated that the boy should be brought back to life and also that the resurrected boy should be made a deity and given precedence in worship in the pantheon of gods. So Lord Śiva advised Brahmā and Viṣṇu to set forth and bring the head of a child they met first. They did as they were told and met an elephant's young one first. Lord Viṣṇu cut its head off with His disc (चक्र सुदर्शन) and brought it to Lord Śiva who asked Brahmā to transplant it on the headless body of the boy. This done, the boy came back to life with an elephant's head. There was a great jubilation all around and Lord Śiva made the resurrected boy the leader of His retinue and gave Him the title of Gaṇapati and Vighneśvara — lord and remover of all obstacles. After this investiture it became a practice that Gaṇeśa's blessings be first invoked by one and all before the commencement of any auspicious ceremony.

A third myth about His miraculous birth states that once goddess Pārvatī applied scented paste on her body and collected its fallen particles herself as a pastime or fun. She then turned and moulded all such particles into the image of a tiny boy. Since its face resembled with that of an elephant, goddess Pārvatī threw it away into the sacred river Gaṅgā, who was a personal friend of her. As soon as the image of Pārvatī 's sandal paste was immersed into the river, the Gaṅgā took it into her own lap and addressed it as her own son (because it happened to be a gift from her friend goddess Pārvatī). So the Gaṅgā changed the image into a living child and adopted it as her own son. All the gods and goddesses called the child Gāṅgeya (गांगेय) i.e., born of the Gaṅgā and worshipped Him everafter. This legend explains, in part, the first worship of Lord Gaṇeśa whenever any pious act or ceremony is undertaken or begun.

Grotesque Anatomy—

It seems really strange that such an important deity of our pantheon should have a grotesque or funny anatomy which evokes more surprise and laughter than a sense of awe and reverence. But a dispassionate appraisal of the symbolic and thematic significance of his figure reveals the fact that great and universal truths are expressed and conveyed by means of parables and paradoxes. A figure represents a fact that underlines it and the image of Lord Gaṇeśa is certainly no exception to this rule.

Broadly speaking, Lord Gaṇeśa has the face of an elephant, a big trunk hanging down straight or turning either towards the right side or left side, a big tusk(एकदन्त), beady shining eyes, four arms, a big bulging belly and a huge disproportionate body.

एकदन्तं महाकायं तप्तकाञ्चनसन्निभम्।
लम्बोदरं विशालाक्षं वन्देऽहं गणनायकम्।।

Lord Gaṇeśa has been described in this prayer as the lord of *Gaṇas*(गणपति)and as having a single tusk, a huge body of the colour of molten gold with a big belly and large lustrous eyes. Even this prayer with a lucid description, has much esoteric meaning behind it. Moreover, He is seen wearing a serpent girdle around His waist.

In some figures, the serpent is seen sporting across His left shoulder like a sacred thread(यज्ञोपवीत).This cold-blooded and cruel reptile gives Lord Gaṇeśa a look of aversion. Figures and images also show a little, agile mouse as the mount of Lord Gaṇeśa. This enigmatic figure of a little golden mouse, which is the smallest mammal, supporting the huge body with an elephant's head, which is the biggest land mammal in the world, has its own thematic value which generally eludes a casual spectator or devotee.

The whole image of figure of Lord Gaṇeśa is obviously meant to convey a profound meaning. The symbolic representation of His anatomical structure is discussed as under—

Symbolism of Lord Gaṇeśa's Physiognomy—

As stated earlier, symbolism is a hall mark of our religious and traditional lore. Symbols have had a special appeal to primitive man who failed to comprehend the ulterior or implied motives and meanings of such fascinating symbols. Crude or peculiar symbols were attributed to various deities with the noble aim of attracting and motivating the masses to a profound adoration which subsequently paved the way for esoteric sublimation.

As regards the multi-faceted physiognomy and the exuberance of Lord Gaṇeśa's body, there are various meaningful and thought-provoking interpretations. A modest attempt is made in the following lines to shed light on some such symbolic aspects of His figure.

The beautiful head of an elephant with the proboscis trunk and tusk implanted on the headless body of Lord Gaṇeśa is symbolic of majesty, strength, determination and profound intelligence. Since the elephant is pure vegetarian and is remarkable for its calibre, sense of propriety and purity of habits, Lord Gaṇeśa is also associated with these noble traits of character. He has acquired precedence over all other deities just as the elephant commands monarchical ascendency over all animals in the animal kingdom. Since the white elephant is a symbol of purity and perfection; prosperity and plentitude in a land, Lord Gaṇeśa is also an abode of

all these cherished and noble qualities. Moreover, just as an elephant uses his trunk for selecting good out of evil, similarly Lord Gaṇeśa has the rare distinction of an astute discrimination and the faculty of distinguishing between the good and the evil.

It is in recognition of such qualities as majesty, magnificence benignity, prudence, compassion and grace that Lord Gaṇeśa is adorned with a tusker's head and is adored and worshipped for the noble attributes symbolised by the elephant's head. The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* refers to a deity called *Dantin* (with one tusk), who is said to possess a twisted trunk (*Vakratuṇḍa*). The elephant seems to have been a totem animal in ancient times. Totemism, which seems to be one of the earliest expressions of organized religion, generally attached much importance to certain animals by adoring them for their qualities and humanizing them. This appears to be the background of the evolution of special rank assigned to the elephant and the growth of the Gaṇeśa cult. Lord Gaṇeśa is also *Gajam* (गजम्), which ordinarily means an elephant, but this word has also a special esoteric meaning. It also means earth, which is born or *Ga* means *Nāda* and *Jam* means that which is born. *Ajam* means unborn, infinite. It has no form; it is pure spirit, whereas *Gajam* symbolizing the materialized world, is finite and has a specific form and hence it has acquired a pride of place in the Hindu culture. It is primarily due to their special value that elephants were assigned a grand role of lifting and supporting the earth. Eight big elephants known as *Diggajas* are said to be supporting the earth on their backs. While four of them occupy the four cardinal points of the earth, four others occupy the four intermediary points and the collapse of these eight carrytides would mean the collapse and destruction of the whole world. So the idols of Lord Gaṇeśa, *prima facie*, represent the material world aptly symbolized by the elephant. Since Lord Gaṇeśa is a male deity, the head chosen for Him is that of a tusker with a long trunk having prehensible nose which is an organ of the breath of life or the connecting link between an individual and the outer world.

In some idols of Lord Gaṇeśa the trunk hangs down straight while in others some turn towards the left and some to the right side. The trunk hanging down straight is indicative of the unmanifested static reservoir of energy called (सुषुम्ना) *Suṣumnā*. If the trunk is seen turning towards the left, it is indicative of the flow of *Iḍā Nāḍī* (इडा नाडी), while the trunk turning towards the right side denotes the flow of *Piṅgalā Nāḍī*. The figure of Lord Gaṇeśa with trunk towards the right is called *Valampiri Vināyakār* because the trunk turning towards the right is the symbol of spiritual progress through the *Savya* (सव्य) or *Devayāna* (देवयान) path of light highly commended by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya himself. Lord Gaṇeśa has been portrayed as having three eyes—two bright, lustrous, penetrating eyes in the trunk and the third eye in His forehead. Whereas the two shining eyes reveal His keen sense of perception (सूक्ष्म दृष्टि), breadth of vision or His (2) All-seeing power and acute discernment (नीर-क्षीर विवेक), the third eye refers to the intelligent eye that is opened under higher meditation and reveals spiritual insight or *Brahma*-consciousness, the supernormal third eye is indicative of opening new spiritual realms of realization. The third eye therefore stands for spiritual enlightenment attained through sustained mystic practices. So Lord Gaṇeśa's third eye is symbolic of His supermundane wisdom and spiritual enlightenment with which He is so richly endowed.

The idols of Lord Gaṇeśa are generally seen only with one tusk, the other tusk is shown broken. Two legends are connected with one tusk. The legend of Lord Gaṇeśa having broken off one of His tusks in order to use it as a weapon to annihilate the elephant-faced demon Gajamukhāsura speaks volumes of His valour and destruction of evil. Moreover, the annihilation of the demon by pulling off His own tusk signifies the slaying of ego, which is the source of many evils. Another myth says that the demon king Rāvaṇa uprooted one of the tusks of Lord Gaṇeśa in order that ornamental set of combs might be made for his queen Mandodarī. This legend denotes that lust and passionate infatuation for women

manifested by Rāvaṇa, are pathways to depravity and destruction. Being content with only one tusk, is indicative of the inexhaustible patience and satisfaction of Lord Gaṇeśa. There are the two essential attributes of all great and noble souls and *Maṅgala Mūrti*. Gaṇeśa is the god of these virtues. There is a still deeper significance of the broken tusk because it is aptly symbolic of the shedding of ego and the remaining single tusk indicates the non-dualistic aspect of the mind when it gets absolutely merged with the *Ātmā* within effacing the phenomenal world. So *Ekadanta* refers to the state of monism (*Advaita*) in a symbolic form. *Caturbhuja Gaṇeśa's* four hands signify plenty and divinity. His four hands holding four objects are indicative of plentiful bounties of nature. They are also suggestive of the four coveted achievements of human life, viz., *Artha* (prosperity), *Dharma* (righteousness), *Kāma* (fulfilment of all desires) and *Mokṣa* (final liberation from worldly bondages). His four hands are also symbolic of the four well-defined states or streams of human consciousness i. e., *Jāgṛti* (wakefulness), *Svapna* (dream), *Suṣupti* (deep sleep or complete absorption in self) and *Turīya* (supreme consciousness, equipoise or enlightenment).

As regards the word *Lambodara*, it literally means a long or big belly, but it again has a purpose to convey a deep meaning. The word *Lambodara* indicates the centrality in the vastness of the universe and its predominant role of digesting the wholesome food and discarding the harmful. *Lambodara* therefore symbolizes the all-pervasive nature and immanence of Lord Gaṇeśa's worship in the universe and His boundless patience and His remarkable capacity of accepting the good and rejecting the evil. In an esoteric sense, *Lambodara* does not refer to the size of His long, pot belly but to the *Savyapātha (Uttarāyaṇa)* which is considered auspicious period (course of the sun) for people to die. The prefix *Lamba* to the word *Udara* is only indicative of the length of time that one may take before he reaches His destination—the eternal home (heaven) after death.

The serpent girdle that Lord Gaṇeśa wears around His loins or which in some idols is shown as an additional embellishment of a sacred thread suspended from His left shoulder, has also a significant meaning. The serpent or the hooded cobra has always been an emblem of totemistic worship among the earliest human civilizations. Even though its venom is deadly, yet it is considered as sacred because primitive man visualized a divine agency in the appearance of cobra and performed rituals to propitiate it. The girdle or sacred thread of a snake with its head touching its own tail or even swallowing it, is said to be a symbol of eternity where there is neither a beginning nor an end. In our mythology the *Ādiśeṣa* on whose coils Lord Mahā Viṣṇu rests, is an allegorical representation of the divine aspect of the mind, the lower aspect of which is represented by the venom-spittiug Kāliya, who was vanquished and tamed by Lord Kṛṣṇa. The association of serpent signifies the concept of *Ādiśeṣa* i. e., beginning and end or timeless time or eternity. It means that the greatness of Lord Gaṇeśa would be appreciated and adored till eternity or for all time to come. Moreover, the serpent is probably indicative of the awakening of *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* (serpent energy) in a *Yogī* as a result of his asceticism, because *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* is the coiled energy lying dormant in all human beings, which is symbolized by a serpent lying in coils. The serpent girdle or sacred thread also refers to the taming of the wicked or evil forces by Lord Gaṇeśa and thus making them docile and harmless. Since tame and harmless snakes were considered pious, they were let loose in the dormitories and as they touched the sick people lying, it was thought to be a divine touch in healing the sick people. The Romans honoured snake and regarded them as emblem by design of caduceus, the staff carried by Mercury, the messenger of their gods. A representation of this staff is still used as an emblem by the medical profession all over the world.

Lord Gaṇeśa's Mount (The Mouse)—

Like His elephant head and snake girdle, Lord Gaṇeśa has a

small mouse as His mount. It is rather strange that a small, obsequious, humble mouse which is apparently incapable of lifting the bulging belly and massive body of Lord Gaṇeśa should be His vehicle. It is further surprising that the mouse which lies in its burrow throughout the day shunning sunlight should be chosen to carry such an important deity. Here again, the mouse which seems an enigmatic figure has a meaningful and even mystic purport. The mouse being the smallest mammal and the elephant being the biggest land mammal, man still occupies the topmost position in the evolutionary process and growth because of his physical and mental superiority. It is because of His supremacy that man is regarded as the master of universe.

In the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* there is a story of a feud between *Agni* (fire) and other gods. *Agni* disappeared into the earth after assuming the form of a mouse. Subsequently, when there was a truce among the parties, this mouse by common consent was presented to Lord Śiva, who energised by this *Agni* incarnate, generated Kārtikeya or Subramanya. Lord Śiva then presented this mouse to His elder son Gaṇeśa, who was for a long time without a mount.

Agni (fire), which is one of the Vedic gods, is indicative of truth, consciousness of will, divine energism and the force of Rudra. *Agni* is regarded as the deity of intellect (मेधा) and is prayed as under—

यां मेधां देवगणाः पितरश्चोऽपासते।
तया मामघ मेधयाग्रे मयि मेधाविनं कुरु।।

"O god *Agni*, endow me with sharp intellect which has been adored by gods and our ancestors alike."Again, god *Agni* has been praised as—

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणं अग्निं आहुरातो दिव्यः सुपर्णो गरुत्मन्।
एकं सत् विप्राः बहुधा वदन्ति अग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानं आहुः।।

"They called Him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni and He is heavenly (God) noble winged bird, the sun; to what is one the learned have given various names. They called Him Agni, Yama, Mātariśvā.

Moreover, Agni, which became the mount of Lord Gaṇeśa by assuming the form of a mouse, is also one of the twenty-five principles which constitute the *Sāṅkhya* system which is purely a psychic system. *Agni*, which contains the elements of sound, touch and form occupies the middle position between *Ākāśa* (ether) and *Vāyu* (air) on the one side and water (अप) and earth(पृथ्वी) on the other. These sides may be termed as higher and lower sides.

So, the metamorphosis of *Agni* into a mouse and getting into the earth and its subsequent capture and presentation to Śiva is an allegory of a mystical nature signifying the role of *Agni* in spiritual matters symbolised as a mouse as Lord Gaṇeśa's mount.

Again, *Agni* is the energising factor of life. When the energising factor leaves, the body becomes cold and dead. We have ample evidence to prove that religious consecration or baptism among the ancient communities was done by means of fire. The holiness of fire is recognised in all religions of the world. Even God (*Brahma*) is regarded as pure fire (ज्योतिर्मय ब्रह्म) and has been beautifully described as—

वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तमादित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ।

(*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* III. 8)

Since *Agni*, the energising power, lies dormant in all forms of existence, it is compared to the golden mouse which lies hidden in its burrow unseen by anybody. Also, the mouse refers to soul while the earth represents the body in which the soul resides. So the importance of mouse as a vehicle of Lord Gaṇeśa is symbolic of the mystic power which is recognised by both the ritualism of *Vedas* and the mysticism of *Yoga*.

Moreover, Lord Gaṇeśa is anthropocentric i.e., centring the universe in Himself and His idographic image represents a cosmic man conceived by man in a grotesque form. This cosmic deity has the power to project the world and withdraw it at His will. Lord Gaṇeśa is the presiding deity of the *Mūlādhāra* (मूलाधार) depicted as sitting on a frail and tiny rodent mouse which is considered and valued as a mystic animal in many countries besides our own.

The word *Mūṣika* has another significant biological interpretation also. It means the thoracic cavity also which encloses the lungs and fleshy heart in human body. The medulla oblongata which controls breathing and heartbeat is situated above the thoracic cavity represented by the mouse as its symbol. Furthermore, medulla oblongata can be identified with the *Mūlādhāra*, of which Lord Gaṇeśa is the presiding deity. In this context the thematic value of the mouse as the mount of Lord Gaṇeśa can well be understood and appreciated.

To sum up, the mouse symbolises hidden life in the atom. The spark of fire that is vibrant in every living phenomenon and which assumed the form of a mouse is that atomic energy which is the procreation of life. Even as fire is a faithful servant but a bad master, the mouse is both creative and destructive. It is therefore kept under the footstool of Lord Gaṇeśa. The task of creation (*Nirmāṇa*) and destruction (*Pralaya*) is attributed to Lord Śiva, Gaṇeśa's father, who creates and destroys, but is also capable of maintaining His creation in trim. The obsequious rat, the great elephant, the powerful man and the dreaded reptile snake—are actually cross sections of the creative energy of Lord Śiva and are personified in His son Lord Gaṇeśa. Here, in the image of Gaṇeśa is revealed in magnificence the potential evidence of *Mahā Śakti* (creative energy) of the creator of God. His wisdom, His compassion, His steadfast non-frivolous nature and His pot-belly are all indicative of the bounty of nature and have a fascinating appeal for all of us.

Abode of Learning—

Lord Gaṇeśa is endowed with vast learning and keen *discrimination* (*buddhi*). He possesses a massive intellect and profound perception which distinguishes Him from other gods and goddesses. So limitless is His learning and erudition that He is compared to goddess Sarasvatī, who is the presiding deity of all learning, literature and arts. Wherever there is a reference to poetry, [illegible] or composition, His grace is invariably invoked [illegible] and votaries of higher arts. It is firmly believed that [illegible] also inspires and enables His devotees to complete

any literary or auspicious venture without facing any impediments whatsoever. For instance, when *Mahātmā* Tulasīdāsa embarked on the stupendous task of composing an epic in Hindi—the most popular vernacular of his day—he too invoked Lord Gaṇeśa's grace and blessings in the very first, opening verse of *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa*.

वर्णानामर्थसंघानां रसानां छन्दसामपि।
मङ्गलानां च कर्त्तारौ वन्दे वाणीविनायकौ।।

Mahātmā Tulasīdāsa says—"I revere goddess Sarasvatī and Lord Gaṇeśa, the originators of letters and their meaning, of poetic sentiments and metres, too, and of all blessings."

He further prays to Śrī Gaṇeśajī in the first Hindi couplet—

जो सुमिरत सिधि होइ गन नायक करिबर बदन।
करउ अनुग्रह सोइ बुद्धि रासि सुभ गुन सदन।।

(*Mānasa* I. O)

"May Gaṇeśa, Lord of Śiva's retinue, by thinking on whom success is won, whose face is the face of a noble elephant, storehouse of wisdom, abode of all good qualities, be gracious to me."

Lord Gaṇeśa is so learned and skilled in the art of writing that when the sage Veda Vyāsa wanted to engage such a competent scribe as could write by dictation one lakh *Saṁskṛta* verses of the eighteen monumental holy books (*Purāṇas*) composed by Him without even a moment's rest or respite, his choice fell only on Lord Gaṇeśa out of all gods and goddesses. Had Lord Gaṇeśa not accomplished the tremendous task of writing, the world would have been much poorer today in the absence of 18 great scriptures. So in the realm of knowledge, art and literature, Lord Gaṇeśa is indeed unparallelled in our religion, which can justly claim to have awakened and enlightened the whole mankind since times immemorial.

Storehouse of Wisdom—

Lord Gaṇeśa is the repository of true wisdom and enlightenment. He is regarded as the wisest among the wise and is in fact wisdom incarnate. He is an inexhaustible mine of discernment and farsightedness and His supremacy in solving the most intricate

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Lord Gaṇeśa is so learned and skilled in the art of writing that when the sage Veda Vyāsa wanted to engage such a competent scribe as could write by dictation one lakh *Saṁskṛta* verses of the eighteen monumental holy books (*Purāṇas*) composed by Him without even a moment's rest or respite, his choice fell only on Lord Gaṇeśa out of all gods and goddesses. Had Lord Gaṇeśa not accomplished the tremendous task of writing, the world would have been much poorer today in the absence of 18 great scriptures. So in the realm of knowledge, art and literature, Lord Gaṇeśa is indeed unparallelled in our religion, which can justly claim to have awakened and enlightened the whole mankind since times immemorial.

Storehouse of Wisdom—

Lord Gaṇeśa is the repository of true wisdom and enlightenment. He is regarded as the wisest among the wise and is in fact wisdom incarnate. He is an inexhaustible mine of discernment and farsightedness and His supremacy in solving the most intricate

problems is acclaimed by all gods and goddesses. It is because of these virtues that He is worshipped first. Lord Gaṇeśa's exceptional precocity and keen intellect could be appreciated in the context of an interesting story which is connected with His boyhood and narrated in the *Padma Purāṇa* (*Sṛṣṭi Khaṇḍa*).

Lord Śiva and goddess Pārvatī were blessed with two lovely promising sons—Gaṇeśa and Skanda. All the deities were extremely delighted to see those two precocious and dutiful children and prepared a huge *Modaka* or ball of sweet made of nectar and offered it to goddess Pārvatī as a gift. Praising the qualities of the *Modaka* she declared that its scent and taste would confer immortality on its possessor/eater and would also make Him the master of all scriptures, and an erudite exponent of literature, music, arts, *Tantra* and *Yoga*. She further announced that since she wanted to offer the whole of it to an individual, both of the sons should prove their worth and superiority over each other by conducting themselves virtuously.

After hearing such an announcement the shrewd Skanda immediately mounted on his royal peacock and set out on pilgrimage. Within a short period he visited all the holy places, took dip in all sacred waters of the land, propitiated all gods and goddesses by observing austerities and undergoing penances which were prescribed in our scriptures. On the other hand the huge-bodied *Lambodara* Gaṇeśa, who could hardly trudge clumsily, thought that since the parents are supreme deities on earth and all the bounties and blessings rest in them, a sincere circumambulation of parents is far better than trotting around the globe and performing religious practices. Thinking that—

सर्वतीर्थमयी माता सर्वदेवमयः पिता।
मातरं पितरं तस्मात् सर्वयत्नेन पूजयेत्।।
मातरः पितरश्चैव यस्तु कुर्यात् प्रदक्षिणम्।
प्रदक्षिणीकृता तेन सप्तद्वीपा वसुन्धरा।।

"Mother is the living embodiment of all holy places and father epitomises all gods; so one should adore and worship one's parents by all pious means. One who circumambulates or goes round one's

parents in all humility and reverence should be deemed to have gone around the entire world." So Gaṇeśajī took a *Parikramā* (circumambulation) of His own parents and felt satisfied and happy.

When Skanda returned from his pilgrimage, both of them stood respectfully before their parents and tried to prove their excellence. The goddess Pārvatī said— "Pilgrimage to all the holy places, taking bath in all sacred rivers, worshipping all the gods and goddesses and meticulously performing all ordained religious rituals and observing all austerities or undergoing all sorts of penances cannot outweigh the piety, dutifulness, reverence and obedience to one's parents and hence Gaṇeśa richly deserves the divine *Modaka*. Lord Śiva also concurred with the judgement of goddess Pārvatī and declared that henceforth Lord Gaṇeśa would take precedence and primacy in worship over all the other gods and goddesses. Worshipping Him first would entitle the devotee to the grace and blessings of all deities and He would henceforth be worshipped first of all.

There is another story about His razor-like sharp intellect. Once Lord Śiva organized a *Yajña* and entrusted the task of inviting all gods to *Swāmi* Kārtikeya within a short, stipulated period. Śrī Kārtikeya set out on his royal peacock to accomplish the task but, despite his best efforts, could not do so in time. Lord Śiva thereupon called Gaṇeśajī to carry out His orders. Gaṇeśajī's mount being a slow-moving rodent mouse He pondered over the whole problem and considering Lord Śiva to be the eternal abode by all gods (देवाधिदेव) went round His father thrice in all reverence announcing His invitation. And lo ! all gods who were invited by Lord Śiva reached the *Yajña* in time. This story is also amply suggestive of Lord Gaṇeśa's mental superiority over *Swāmi* Kārtikeya. So Lord Gaṇeśa is an embodiment of keen intellect, supreme wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. He is rightly praised as 'बिद्या-बारिधि, बुद्धि-बिधाता' (the deity and dispenser of wisdom).

Lord Gaṇeśa as Yoga Mūrti—

Lord Gaṇeśa is depicted as *Yogamūrti* for He rightly represents our age old, *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* the eight limbs or stages of *Yoga* which

problems is acclaimed by all gods and goddesses. It is because of these virtues that He is worshipped first. Lord Gaṇeśa's exceptional precocity and keen intellect could be appreciated in the context of an interesting story which is connected with His boyhood and narrated in the *Padma Purāṇa* (*Sṛṣṭi Khaṇḍa*).

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collectively lead to the gateway of *Mokṣa* (final liberation). *Yoga* is regarded as a potent means of complete liberation of the individual from the bondage of the material world by a process of physical and mental discipline culminating in a profound spiritual transformation and merger of the self into the supreme self i. e., God or *Brahma* within. Such a merger secures for one the *Mokṣa* (total emancipation or freedom from the cycles of births and rebirths or transmigration of the soul). It is because of His having attained complete mastery over *Yoga* that Lord Gaṇeśa is described as *Siddhisadana* the abode of all *Siddhis* or bounties, which are eight in number namely—*"Aṇimā, Mahimā, Garimā, Laghimā, Prāpti, Prākāmya, Īśitva* and *Vaśitva."*

The worshipper of Lord Gaṇeśa is supposed to be entitled to all such *Siddhis* (bounties) depending on the unwavering, life-long and profound worship of his *Iṣṭa Devatā* i.e., Gaṇeśajī. So Lord Gaṇeśa represents the highest stage of ecstatic consciousness in *Yoga* which leads to perfect self-realization or God-realization.

The foregoing account of Lord Gaṇeśa as a deity extraordinary, an abode of all virtues, a repository of wisdom, and a cynosure of spiritual enlightenment or divinity amply proves that He justly deserves primacy in worship among the Hindu pantheon and is entitled to very wide Gaṇeśa cult since times immemorial. In fact, there is hardly any aspect of our religion, culture and tradition that does not bear an indelible impress of Lord Gaṇeśa. He has become an integral part of our socio-religious and psycho-social consciousness which has transcended the barriers of country or clime, race or religion and is regarded as a unifying force to bring humanity together.

Let me conclude this article by quoting a well-known hymn to Lord Gaṇeśa in the form of an invocation.

शुक्लाम्बरधरं देवं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम्।
प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत्सर्वविघ्नोपशान्तये।।

Symbolically speaking, this hymn invokes the help of Him (Lord Gaṇeśa) against all obstacles, referring to Him as the pure essence of

luminous mind or all-pervasive mind-sky '*śuklāmbaradharaṁ devam'* with four hands indicating His divinity and the colour of moon suggestive of mental enlightenment, moon being the symbol of mind and a face beaming with beatitude.

कृपालुरकृतद्रोहस्तितिक्षुः सर्वदेहिनाम्।
सत्यसारोऽनवद्यात्मा समः सर्वोपकारकः॥
कामैरहतधीर्दान्तो मृदुः शुचिरकिञ्चनः।
अनीहो मितभुक् शान्तः स्थिरो मच्छरणो मुनिः॥
अप्रमत्तो गभीरात्मा धृतिमाञ्जितषड्गुणः।
अमानी मानदः कल्पो मैत्रः कारुणिकः कविः॥

"A pious soul is compassionate to all embodied souls, harms none, is forbearing, has truthfulness for his strength, faultless of mind, equipoised (in joy and sorrow) and beneficent to all; his judgment is never clouded by (attachment to) the pleasures of sense; he is self-disciplined, soft (by nature), pure (perfectly moral in his dealings), resourceless and effortless, lives on a scanty meal, is free from passions and constant, solely depends on Me and is given to contemplation and vigilant, remains unexcited (even when there is room for excitement) and firm (even in adversity); he must have conquered the six waves (viz., cold and heat, greed and infatuation, hunger and thirst), does not seek honour, though bestowing it (on others), is capable of imparting knowledge to others, sincere, altruistic and possessed of right knowledge."

—*Bhāgavata* (XI. 11. 29—31)

When Brahmā the creator, made his humanly creation, he instructed them to perform sacrifices. They were assured by him that they would prosper by performing *Yajña.* It is fulfiller of their desire like *Kalpavṛkṣa.* He advised to propitiate gods by *Yajña* and in their turn the gods would foster their interests. One who enjoys a pleasurable commodity without offering to gods, is a thief because whatever he has got, is the result of the blessing of gods.

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (II. 10—12)

Lord Gaṇeśa (Pillaiyār, the Lord of Children)

—Prof. D. Vaidyanathan

Gaṇapati, Gaṇeśa, Siddhivināyaka, Vināyaka, Vighneśvara are a few of the names by which Lord Pillaiyār is widely known. All Hindus worship Him with great zeal and devotion.

He is the eldest son of Lord Parameśwara and Mother Pārvatī. He is invoked at the beginning of all important ceremonial functions at home and also outside in temples, *Bhajana Samājas* and so on. This is because He protects His devotees from all obstacles (*Vighnas)* hence His name Vighneśvara. Besides, His benevolence is essential for the fulfilment of human desires. Sage Veda Vyāsa (author of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhāgavata)* worshipped Him, reciting His sixteen names with which we are all familiar.

All over India in general, and South India in particular, there are temples dedicated to Lord Gaṇeśa; in most idols, His trunk is turned towards the left though in a few cases, the trunk is turned towards the right. He is worshipped in thirty-two forms, six of which are with His consorts, Siddhi and Buddhi, while He is alone in the remaining.

Of the thirty-two forms of Lord Gaṇeśa, the first is called Bāla Gaṇapati, while the last is called Saṅkaṭahara Gaṇapati. The former has four hands and is seated on a lotus. His form is like the rising sun. The latter too has four hands and is also adorned with bright ornaments and blue dress with a consort found seated on His left thigh. Immeasurable is the power of this particular form and devotees should adore Him with His twenty-one names as this number is especially suited to Him; and with which also, we are all familiar.



Infant Gaṇeśa in the lap of Pārvatī

The worship of Lord Gaṇeśa has become very popular, particularly in Maharashtra. He is worshipped with great eclat from the *Vināyaka Caturthī* day to the *Ananta Caturdaśī* day (a ten day festival in August-September each year).

In Maharashtra, there are many temples dedicated to Lord Gaṇeśa of which only two are selected for a brief description here. There are the Siddhi Vināyaka temple at Prabhadevi, Bombay, and the Siddhi Vināyaka Mahāgaṇapati temple at Titvala, situated 11 kms. away from Kalyan Junction on the Bombay-Nasik railway line.

Siddhi Vināyaka Temple—

If it is Tuesday, it is Siddhi Vināyaka. On these days, as also on *Saṅkaṣṭī (Saṅkaṭahara Caturthī)* days, the queue extends from the temple premises right up to the Portuguese Church, people waiting for *Darśana* of the Lord from 4 a.m. till past midnight. Devotees start gathering from 10 p.m. the previous night, unmindful of weather conditions. Since April 16, 1982, arrangements have been made for the supply of drinking water to people waiting in the queues on these days by the trustees of the temple—a long felt want indeed.

Lord Siddhi Vināyaka of Prabhadevi temple is one of the few cases of an idol whose trunk is turned towards the right; and it is looked upon as a powerful aspect of Gaṇeśa. He grants all favours to the devotees on mere asking; hence they praise Him as a very beneficent, benevolent deity.

Siddhi Vināyaka Mahāgaṇapati Temple—

Titvala is a famous pilgrim centre in Maharashtra. The temple stands by the side of a lake called Gaṇeśa lake. The main entrance to the temple is narrow. Crossing the three arches from the assembly hall and as we proceed further, we can see the huge statue of Lord Mahāgaṇapati. The statue is 3 feet and five inches tall and 3 feet and 5 inches broad. There are four hands. In the upper hand of the right side is a *Paraśu,* and in the lower hand is a *Rudrākṣa Mālā;* while in the upper hand of the left side is a *Gadā* with a lotus, and

in the lower hand is a *Modaka.*

On the broad forehead of the statue in the two *Gaṇḍasthalas* are the Sūrya and the Candra symbols. In the eyes are two ruby marks.

The Lord is in the sitting pose with the trunk turned towards the left. The two tusks are found broken in the middle of each; and a sacred thread, a chain and a snake adorn the shoulder and the neck of the statue. Besides, the ears are broad and beautiful to look at.

In conformity with the Lord's name Lambodara, the stomach is large and handsome to look at. A snake is also there on the stomach.

At the navel in the centre of the front of the body is a ruby mark.

The statue is found adorned with ornaments like the headwear (crown), ear rings and a *Kavacam,* and His facial expression is not only pleasing but also graceful.

The devotees can touch the statue of the Lord but for the performance of *Pūjā* there is a small statue of the Lord nearby. This *Bhoga* statue can be worshipped with flowers, *Kuṁkuma* etc., and a *Pujārī* is always there.

The temple usually opens at 5.00 a.m. and remains open till 10.00 p.m. for *Darśana* but on festival days, it is open for 24 hours.

Many devotees go to Titvala on Sundays, Tuesdays and *Saṅkaṣṭī* days besides festival days like *Vināyaka Caturthī.* On such occasions, the Central Railway runs special trains.

The temple has the statue of Siddhivināyaka Mahāgaṇapati of Kaṇva *Ṛṣi's Āśrama* and which was worshipped by Śakuntalā. Later, by His grace only, she became the queen of king Duṣyanta's kingdom—the king forming the 19th in the *Puru* lines of kings to rule the land.

The history of the statue was not available for a long time after king Duṣyanta's rule. It was during the time of Peśawā Mādhava Rāo (1745-1772) that Titvala came into prominence.

He was a staunch devotee of Lord Gaṇeśa. His family deity was Cintāmaṇi Gaṇeśa enshrined in the famous temple at Theur. He often used to visit guest house of Vasudari, a mile away from

Titvala, accompanied by 200-300 people from in and around Poona.

The manager of the guest house Śrī Rāmacandra Mahendalekara used to attend on them to their satisfaction. It is only to meet their needs that he dug a lake in Titvala with a perennial source of water which later became known as Gaṇeśa Lake.

Once while work was being done on the lake, a huge statue of Gaṇeśa was found in it. The manager immediately despatched a horseman to Poona to convey the news to Mādhava Rāo Peśawā. To his surprise, Gaṇeśa had appeared before him in a dream the previous night when the Lord addressed him thus—"I am in the lake. Take Me out and instal Me in a suitable place."

The next day morning, when the horseman met Mādhava Rāo Peśawā at Poona and conveyed the news of the finding to him, he left for Titvala accompanied by a small group of people. With great devotion, he had *Darśana* of the Lord while in the lake. A small temple was then constructed and the Mahāgaṇapati statue was installed in it and duly consecrated. This is how the Titvala Mahāgaṇapati temple came into existence some 230 years back.

To perform the daily *Pūjā* at the temple, Peśawā Mādhava Rāo gave permanent authority to a local brahmin family surnamed Jośī. Since then until now the Jośī family is involved in the daily *Pūjā* to the Lord at Titvala.

Miracles Galore—

According to *Pujārī* Jośī, in the lives of many a devotee, miracles happened due to the Lord's grace. Girls whose marriages were delayed due to *Maṅgala (Aṅgāraka) Doṣa* or *Doṣa* due to some other planetary positions in their horoscopes get married soon after a *Darśana* of the Lord at Titvala because of His bounteous grace. The difficulties that arise in a *Sumaṅgalī's* life immediately disappear after a *Darśana* of the Lord. Married women who long for children come to Titvala and pray to the Lord to grant them offspring. Their prayers are heard and granted. After a year or so, they return to Titvala, this time with their children in

arms, place them near His feet and pray for His continued blessings.

Many are the miracles happening, more so because Titvala Śrī Siddhi Vināyaka Mahāgaṇapati is a *Jāgṛta* God showering His blessings on all His devotees, both near and far.

समपूजकानां परिपालकानां यतेन्द्रियानां च तपोधनानाम्।
देशस्य राष्ट्रस्य कुलस्य राज्ञः करोतु शान्तिं भगवान् गणेशः।।

It was a fascinating scene when Lord Gaṇeśa visited Kashi (the capital of king Divodāsa) in the form of an astrologer—a very old brahman. He made *Avimukta Kṣetra* as his circle. He started moving around the locality and telling about the past, present and future of persons. He was extremely sweet and accurate in his prophetic statements. His name spread like wild fire in the whole of the city.

One day he was invited by the queens of the palace. He went and fully satisfied them with his answers. One day the queen requested the king to invite the astrologer and have a discourse with him. Invited by the king the Lord went there. The king expressed his desire to leave the state-affairs and go for the forest in order to get salvation. The astrologer informed him that on eighteenth day from thence an effulgent brahman would come to him and teach him the real knowledge. On the day fixed by him Lord Viṣṇu in the guise of a brahman reached there and taught him the way for the ultimate emancipation.

—*Compiled*

When Lord Gaṇeśa swallowed Analāsura, his stomach started burning. The gods Brahmā etc., contributed many things having cooling effect but no, the fire could not be extinguished and Lord Gaṇeśa remained restless. Then eighty thousand *Munis* who were present there, started offering twenty-one *Dūrvāṅkuras* each. There was a heap of *Dūrvā* like a mountain, but it did the work and the fire extinguished and Lord Gaṇeśa became peaceful.

—*Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* (63-64)

Gaṇeśa Caturthī Māhātmyam

In the lunar system of time arrangement we have in a month two fortnights—dark and bright, consisting of roughly fifteen days each. The dates are counted separately and independently, so in every fortnight we have one *Caturthī Tithi.* The fourth date *(Caturthī)* in the dark fortnight is called *Saṅkaṣṭī* or *Saṅkaṣṭahara Caturthī* and that in the bright fortnight is known as *Varadā Caturthī* or *Vināyaka Caturthī.* Both these dates in every month are very dear to Lord Gaṇeśa and whosoever observes fast, maintains *Vrata* and worships according to prescribed rules and *Mantras,* the auspicious Lord Gaṇeśa fulfils all his desires and even bestows final liberation.

Origin of Caturthī—

According to *Śiva Purāṇa* in the *Śveta Kalpa* it so happened that the Lord Śiva chaffed the head of the boy created by mother goddess Pārvatī and was appointed to keep her doors. The compassionate mother became extremely sad. She summoned her energies. They appeared before her in the forms of ferocious ladies. She ordered them to play havoc in the universe and annihilate the entire creation. It was a scene of deadly dissolution. All the gods were terrified and started wailing and lamenting. Brahmā, the great grandfather of the universe intervened. The gods found and brought the head of an elephant and Lord Viṣṇu transplanted that head on the beheaded body of the child who was later to be Lord Gaṇeśa and re-enlivened Him.

To see the boy alive again the mother goddess was pleased and happy. In order to earn the grace of the mother, all the three superior deities declared the child to be the commander of the *Gaṇas* (hosts)

of Lord Śiva. So that way the name Gaṇeśa was justified. At the same time the God of the gods Lord Śiva bestowed His son Gaṇeśa with so many auspicious boons. He said that it will be sufficient to mention your name to destroy all the obstacles. You will be foremost worshipped in any and every function of religious, social or commercial importance and equally by human beings, gods and demons. The Lord Śiva further said—"Since you appeared on the fourth day in the dark fortnight of the month *Bhādrapada* while the moon was going to rise; at the time when you sprang out from the lovely Pārvatī, the first part of the night was almost over, so those who intend to propitiate you, should begin the vow or fast from that very date. That day is the best and most auspicious day for performing the worship of Lord Gaṇeśa. This *Caturthī Vrata* and worship will prove to the devotees to be a bestower of all accomplishments.

चतुर्थ्यां त्वं समुत्पन्नो भाद्रे मासि गणेश्वर।
असिते च तथा पक्षे चन्द्रस्योदयने शुभे।।
प्रथमे च तथा यामे गिरिजायाः सुचेतसः।
आविर्बभूव ते रूपं यस्मात्ते व्रतमुत्तमम्।।
तस्मात्तद्दिनमारभ्य तस्यामेव तिथौ मुदा।
व्रतं कार्यं विशेषेण सर्वसिद्ध्यै सुशोभनम्।।

(*Śiva Purāṇa, Rudra Saṁhitā, Kumāra Khaṇḍa* XVIII. 35—37)

The Lord Śiva blessed His favourite child the Lord Gaṇeśa that whosoever would worship Him according to the prescribed rules, reciting prescribed *Mantras*, with prescribed worshipping materials, they would get rid of the obstacles and would get desired success in every undertaking. The people of all the four grades, more particularly the ladies should invariably perform this *Caturthī* worship. The kings also desirous of the prosperity and expanding their kingdom, must necessarily perform this *Pūjā*. A person performing your worship will certainly get whatever he desires.

In *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* there is a mention that *Gaṇeśa Pūjā* should be performed in the midday of fourth day in the bright fortnight of the month *Bhādrapada*. It is said to be most beneficial and

auspicious. The story regarding the appearance of Gaṇeśa runs thus—The beloved spouse of Lord Śiva, goddess Pārvatī had a very keen desire to have vision of Lord Gaṇeśa. She went to Lekhanadri. She chose a lovely place on the said mountain and meditating on Lord Gaṇeśa started muttering His one lettered *Mantra.* Twelve years passed as she continued to practise severe penance, Lord Gaṇeśa appeared before her and promised to incarnate Himself as her son.

It was *Bhādrapada* month and the *Caturthī* of bright fortnight, Monday and the constellation *Svātī,* while there was a congregation of five auspicious planets in one zodiac. It was the time of noon when the universal mother Pārvatī worshipped Lord Gaṇeśa with all the sixteen *Upacāras* and at that very moment Lord Gaṇeśa, white like *Kunda* flower holding six arms and three eyes with all His splendour and grandeur appeared before her. Hence that *Caturthī* was known to be *Varadā Caturthī* as that day the compassionate Lord granted boon to mother Pārvatī. That day a devotee should make an earthen image of Lord Gaṇeśa at the time of noon and worship it with all his faith and devotion, meditating and contemplating His various aspects and forms and muttering His name. This process of worship on this particular day is very beneficial to the devotees. In *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* Lord Brahmā Himself says that it is not possible for anyone to describe the greatness of *Caturthī Vrata.*

Mudgala Purāṇa says that being defeated and crushed by the demon Lobhāsura, the gods eulogized and praised to Lord Gajānana to kill the formidable demon. The most compassionate Lord appeared on this sacred *Caturthī* in the midday and therefore this *Tithi* became auspicious and benedictory.

There is a reference in *Mudgala Purāṇa* regarding the origin of this sacred *Tithi*—the *Caturthī.* Once Brahmā, the great grandfather of the universe seriously meditated upon Lord Gaṇeśa after he had created the universe, in order to get success in so many projects which he intended to complete. At that very moment the ultimate

Prakṛti, Mahāmāyā, the goddess appeared from his mouth. That most beautiful goddess had four legs, four arms and four lovely faces. The creator was very happy to see her. That great goddess prostrated herself at the feet of the creator, eulogized and praised him with various *Stotras* and hymns and finally submitted—"O Lord of the universe, I have been born from your mouth, the best limb of your body. You are my father. Please instruct me what I should do. O Lord, my salutations to your lotus-like feet. Please allot some place for my residence and provide the enjoyable things to live upon."

The creator asked her to make a beautiful creation and then he initiated her in six lettered *Mantra (Vakratuṇḍāya Hum).* That goddess followed his instructions and started making *Japa* while meditating upon Lord Gaṇeśa with full concentration. She practised severe penance for a long period of one thousand celestial years. Lord Gaṇeśa was pleased and appeared before her and said—"O great lady, I am extremely pleased with your service that you performed without taking any food for such a long period. Ask for any desired boon." The goddess was very happy to see her object materialised before her eyes. She praised and praised. Her eyes were filled with tears of joy. She prostrated before the Lord and said—"If You are really pleased O compassionate Lord, grant me Your devotion. Kindly make me competent to create the universe as instructed by the great grandfather. Your grace may always be upon me and I may not be separated from You."

Lord Gaṇeśa said—"Be it so. You will be capable of bestowing all the four ultimate objects of life upon my devotees. You will always be dear to me. You will be the mother of all the lunar dates and known by the name of *Caturthī.* Your left portion will be black and right portion white. Undoubtedly you will be my date of birth. I will specially protect those who will perform vow on *Caturthī* and there will not be any other vow as great as that of yours."

Saying so the Lord disappeared. *Caturthī,* the mother of all

Tithis, started creation work while always having Gaṇapati in her mind and meditating upon Him. All of a sudden her body appeared in two colours—the left portion black and right portion white. She was amazed. She again remembered Gaṇeśa and was just about to start creation work that the *Tithi Pratipadā* came out from her mouth. Similarly *Dvitīyā* the second date, came from her nostrils, the third date from her breasts, the fifth from her fingers, the sixth from her heart, the seventh from her eyes, the eighth from her arms, the ninth from her stomach, the tenth from her ears, eleventh from her throat, twelfth from her legs, thirteenth from her udders, fourteenth from her ego, full moon day from her mind and *Amāvasyā,* the new moon day from her tongue.

Both the *Caturthīs* accompanied by all other *Tithis,* started *Tapasyā* with muttering the name of Gaṇeśa. They continued this way for complete one year. Lord Gaṇeśa felt propitiated and appeared. During midday time He approached on bright *Caturthī* and spoke—"Ask for boon." The bright *Caturthī* said—"O Lord Gaṇeśa, You always make Your residence in my heart and give me Your eternal devotion." The compassionate Gaṇeśa granted this boon to her saying—"You happened to have My vision during midday time, so the gods like Śiva etc., will remember Me and meditate upon Me at the time of noon. On bright *Caturthī* My devotees will perform your vow. Whosoever will observe fast and worship you on this day, his accumulated actions and fruits thereof, will be wiped out and I will grant them everything. You would be named *Varadā* (the giver of boons). Saying so the Lord Gaṇeśa disappeared and bright *Caturthī* the goddess was known since then as *Varadā.* She became a darling to Lord Gaṇeśa. On that day by maintaining fast and worshipping Lord Gaṇeśa with prescribed rules and materials, who breaks his fast on *Pañcamī,* he is sure to get *Dharma, Artha, Kāma* and *Mokṣa.* He gets his every desire fulfilled and in the end attains to the abode of Lord Gaṇeśa.

Then He went to the dark *Caturthī* at the time of arising of moon when a quarter of the night was passed and said—"O fortunate lady,

ask for boon. I will fulfil every desire of yours." So having the vision of Lord Gaṇeśa and feeling gratified with His words, the dark *Caturthī* fell at His feet, worshipped Him as prescribed in the scriptures. She praised and eulogized Him and submitted—"O auspicious Lambodara, if You are really pleased with me, kindly grant me Your staunch devotion, I always may be dear to You and should never be separated from You."

The Lord was quite pleased with her and granting her desired boon, said—"You will always be dear to Me and never get separated from Me. You have acquired My grace after moon-rise during night. Therefore, whenever there will be *Caturthī* at the time of moon-rise, the time will be most auspicious and you will be dear to Me. By My grace you will be quite capable of removing all the obstacles and miseries of the devotees who will perform the vow without taking food or even water. You will be competent to grant them all the four ultimate objects of life. You will destroy all their actions with fruits accumulated, *Prārabdha* or being accumulated. They will enjoy in this world every comfort and free from the shackles of birth and death, will attain to My abode which is very difficult for even the *Yogīs*. O goddess, the remover of calamities, undoubtedly by My grace you will be distributing bliss and pleasure among My devotees. The *Yatis* should perform the vow on that day without food and water. The householders however may take food at the time of moon-rise but only after worshipping Me and feeding brahmans. In the month of *Śrāvaṇa* one should take *Modaka* and in the *Bhādrapada* curd should be taken. In the month of *Āśvina*, nothing should be taken on the days of *Caturthī*. In *Kārtika* only milk should be taken whereas in *Mārgaśīrṣa* one should remain on water only. In *Pauṣa* cow urine and in *Māgha* white sesamum seeds are allowed. In the month of *Phālguna* sugar, in *Caitra Pañcagavya* (milk, curd, ghee, urine and dung; all from cow) in *Vaiśākha* the lotus seed, in *Jyeṣṭha* ghee of cow and in *Āṣāḍha* honey should be taken as food.

Almost all the *Caturthīs* of dark fortnight are known as

Saṅkaṣṭī Caturthī and their observance is intended to remove troubles and obstructions. A *Saṅkaṣṭī Caturthī* for fast and worship is acceptable only when there is an availability of *Caturthī* at the time of moon-rise. If two consequitive nights we get *Caturthī* at the time of rising moon then the first one (when the whole day it is *Tṛtīyā* but at the time of moon-rise *Caturthī* is found) should be preferred for fast and worship both. If however, on both the days one does not find *Caturthī* at the time of moon-rise, the later should be taken to be the day for observing fast and performing worship. This is the decision given in *Vratarāja*.

देहस्थोऽपि न देहस्थो विद्वान् स्वप्राद् यथोत्थितः।
अदेहस्थोऽपि देहस्थः कुमतिः स्वप्नदृग् यथा।
इन्द्रियैरिन्द्रियार्थेषु गुणैरपि गुणेषु च।
गृह्यमाणेष्वहं कुर्यान्न विद्वान् यस्त्वविक्रियः॥

"An enlightened soul (a *Jīvanmukta)* is not tied to the body even though he remains in the body any more than one who has awoke from a dream and does not feel any connection with the dream-body. A man of perverted intellect (who looks upon the body alone as his self) remains identified (on the contrary) with his body, though not (essentially) confined within it, just as a dreaming person who takes dream-body to be real and feels that he himself is identified with that body. Remaining unaffected while the senses are receiving the sense-objects and the three modes are receiving the modes themselves, he who is enlightened, does not feel that he is apprehending them."

—*Bhāgavata* (XI. 11. 8-9)

Just as ignorant persons keep themselves always busy with actions in order to achieve a mundane aim, similarly a man of knowledge also should always keep himself busy in acting but that should be for the welfare of the society.

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (II. 25)

Śrī Gaṇapati

—T. D. Joshi

ॐ श्री गणेशाय नमः।

"Praise to Thee, O Gaṇeśa. Thou art manifestly the truth; Thou art undoubtedly the creator, preserver and destroyer, the Supreme Brahma, the eternal spirit........ By Thee was this universe manifested; for Thou art earth, water, fire, air, and ether. Thou art Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Rudra. We meditate on Thy countenance; enlighten, therefore, our understanding. He, who continually meditates upon Thy divine form, conceiving it to be with one tooth, four hands, bearing a rat on Thy banner, of a red hue, with a large belly, anointed with red perfumes, arrayed in red garments, worshipped with offerings of red flowers, abounding in compassion, the cause of this universe, imperishable, unproduced and unaffected by creation, becomes the most excellent of *Yogīs*."

—Gaṇeśa Upaniṣad

Gaṇapati is the *Līlā Putra,* son of the parents of the universe, Pārvatī and Parameśvara, the eternal pair, the *Satyam,* the *Śivam* and the *Sundaram.* The story of the birth of Gaṇapati is known thus. While in the bathroom, mother Pārvatī removed the ointment paste from Her body and gave the lump the shape of a human child and endowed it with life and power. She then directed the boy to stand guard at the gates of the bathroom and not to allow anyone inside till She completed Her bath and came out. Gaṇapati did as was directed. Meanwhile, *Bhagavān* Rudra, the consort of Pārvatī, arrived, and He wanted to go in but Gaṇapati would not allow Him in as the mother was in the process of taking bath. Quarrel ensued between the two and *Bhagavān* Rudra beheaded the child. Pārvatī,

after bath, came out and to Her great anguish found the boy headless, lying in a pool of blood. She was furious and demanded that the child be restored to life by putting a head on His trunk. *Bhagavān* Rudra asked *Bhagavān* Viṣṇu to bring the head of one such being, who was sleeping with the head pointing towards the north. *Bhagavān* Viṣṇu spotted a she-elephant, sleeping with her calf with their heads pointing towards the north. *Bhagavān* Viṣṇu chopped off the head of the calf and brought it to *Bhagavān* Rudra, who planted it on the trunk of the boy and revived Him. To please Pārvatī further, *Bhagavān* Rudra appointed Him the chief of *Gaṇas, Gaṇādhipati.* Such was the *Līlā* exhibited by the divine pair.

In modern parlance, this incident represents the first fully successful transplant of an animal head on a human trunk by extremely skilled surgeons.

About the *Bāla Līlā* of Śrī Gaṇeśa, there is a beautiful *Śloka* as under—

हे हेरम्ब! किमम्ब ? रोदिषि कथं? कर्णौ लुठत्यग्रिभूः।
किं ते स्कन्द विचेष्टितं ? मम पुरा गणना कृता चक्षुषाम्।।
नैतत्तेप्युचितं गजास्य चरितं नासां मिमीतेऽम्ब मे।
तावेवं सहसा विलोक्य हसितव्यग्रा शिवा पातु नः।।

"O Gaṇeśa, why are you crying?" "Brother Kārtikeya has pulled my ears." "Kārtika, why have you done that," "Mother, He was counting my eyes." "You should not have done that, O *Gajendravadana*". "But Mother, He was measuring my nose." Having heard thus, Mother burst into a fit of giggles. May the Mother provide us protection."

Gaṇapati is the giver of wisdom, name, fame and what not. In every orthodox Hindu family, the blessings of *Vighna-Vināyaka-Gaṇapati* are invariably invoked before the commencement of every religious, social and other endeavours, e.g., initiation of the child to the three *Rs,* marriage ceremony, house-warming ceremony, undertaking journeys etc., for their successful accomplishment and also for warding off distress. Later, thanks-giving ceremony, in the

form of recitation of *Satya Nārāyaṇa-Kathā* or any other *Kathā,* is performed, in which also the first *Pūjā* is offered to Gaṇapati. By recitation of the names of Gaṇapati, with love and devotion, a person of good conduct, is doubly assured of the success of his endeavour and worries fade away from his mind as the clouds are swept away by strong winds. In sum, the recitation is the harbinger of all good events. The following simple *Stotra* is recited by the devout on all such occasions—

सुमुखश्चैकदन्तश्च कपिलो गजकर्णकः।
लम्बोदरश्च विकटो विघ्ननाशो विनायकः।।
धूम्रकेतुर्गणाध्यक्षो भालचन्द्रो गजाननः।
द्वादशैतानि नामानि यः पठेच्छृणुयादपि।।
विद्यारम्भे विवाहे च प्रवेशे निर्गमे तथा।
संग्रामे सङ्कटे चैव विघ्नस्तस्य न जायते।।

Gaṇapati is the first scribe of the world, by whose grace, the world has been able to see and read the colossal epic *Mahābhārata* dictated to Him by *Maharṣi* Veda Vyāsa. *Mahābhārata* contains everything that exists in the world.

After my father passed away, I found a heap of books and papers lying in an alcove in our house. I came across a scroll of paper consisting of the following *Mantra* written and signed by my grandfather *Paṇḍit* Rāmacandra Jośī in "श्री सम्बत् १९५१, ज्येष्ठ १९ गते", a hundred years ago.

(1) *Śrī Kṣipra Prasādana Gaṇapati Mantra*
(2) *Śrī Śaiva Ṣaḍakṣara Tāraka Mantra*
(3) *Śrī Sūryāṣṭākṣara Mantra*
(4) *Śrī Rāmaṣaḍākṣara Mantra*
(5) *Śrī Mahogratārā Mantra.*

I reproduce below the *Śrī Kṣipraprasāda Gaṇapati Mantra,* which is simple to practise, for the benefit of the *Sādhaka.*

ॐ श्रीगणेशाय नमः।। ॐ अस्य श्री क्षिप्रप्रसादन गणपति मन्त्रस्य गणक ऋषिः क्षिप्रप्रसादन गणपतिर्देवता गं बीजम् नमः शक्तिः गणपतिप्रीतये ममचतुर्वर्ग सिद्ध्यर्थे अमुक संख्यया जपे विनियोगः। गणक ऋषये नमः शिरसि, विद्छन्दसे नमो मुखे, क्षिप्रप्रसादन गणपतिदेवतायै नमो हृदि, गं बीजाय नमो गुह्ये, नमः शक्तये

नमः पादयोः, गां अंगुष्ठाभ्यां नमः, गीं तर्जनीभ्यां नमः, गूं मध्यमाभ्यां नमः, गैं अनामिकाभ्यां नमः, गौं कनिष्ठिकाभ्यां नमः, गः करतलकरपृष्ठाभ्यां नमः, गां हृदयाय नमः, ॐ गीं शिरसे स्वाहा, ॐ गूं शिखायै वषट्, ॐ गैं कवचाय हुँ, ॐ गौं नेत्रत्रयाय वौषट्, ॐ गः अस्त्राय फट्। ध्यानम्—पाशांकुशौ कल्पलता विषाणं दधत्सु शुण्डाहितबीजपूरः। रक्तस्त्रिनेत्रस्तरुणोनुमौलिर्हारोज्ज्वलो हस्तिमुखोऽवतान्नः॥ ततः मूलेन व्यापकं कृत्वा गुह्यादिति मन्त्रेण दक्षिणकरे समर्पयेत्। गं क्षिप्रप्रसादनाय नमः॥

सिन्दूराभं त्रिनेत्रंपृथुतरजठरं हस्तपद्मैर्दधानं
दन्तं पाशाङ्कुशेष्टान्युरुकरविलसद्बीजपूराभिरामम्।
बालेन्दुद्योतमौलिं करिपतिवदनं दानपूरार्द्रगण्डं
भोगीन्द्राबद्धभूषं भजत गणपतिं रक्तवस्त्राङ्गरागम्॥

"Do worship Lord Gaṇeśa, the hue of whose body is red like vermilion; who has three eyes; who has a very big belly; who is holding the tusk, noose, goad, the gesture of granting boon and lemon in his hands; who is lovely and handsome; whose forehead is illumined by a crescent moon; having an elephant face; whose temples are always wet with the ichor discharged; who has Vāsuki on his body as an ornament and who wears red garments and applies red sandal paste."

—*Compiled*

It is actions which take a person to the heaven or throw him in the hell. Through their actions only they become an emperor or a servant. It is through their actions that they become handsome, healthy or else sickly. It is the actions which make a person indulge in the worldly objects and it is again actions which make him untainted. It is the actions which make a man wealthy or a beggar. It is actions through which the domestic environment of a person is good and it is again actions which make him unwanted by the family members. One's actions only provide an opportunity to have a lovely and meritorious wife and a good son and happiness. Again through one's actions one becomes issueless, having a wicked wife or even without wife.

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (XI. 21—24)

Gaṇeśa–Mind without Measure
(Mythology in the Light of Biology)

—*Shastri Chandrashekhar*

Śrī Gaṇeśāya Namaḥ—traditionally a Hindu invokes the blessings of Lord Gaṇeśa before starting any work whether a social ceremony or any personal undertaking. It is said—He, who at the time of schooling, marriage, house-warming, commencing a journey and when in trouble or conflict, remembers Gaṇeśa...... will surely overcome all hindrances to fulfil his mission. So strong was this feeling that Gaṇeśa became more important than His father Śiva or any other senior God. It was declared that Śiva before destroying Tripura, Viṣṇu before subduing Bali, Brahmā before creating the earth, Pārvatī before killing Mahiṣāsura....remembered Gaṇeśa for their success. *Gaṇapati Upaniṣad* even identified Him with *Brahma,* the Supreme Self. In spite of so many changes through millennia even now Gaṇeśa is worshipped as the first God by different sections of the Hindus and others as well, on all occasions except funeral. Let us enquire as to how He became important, more than any other God and why He is so significant in our life. The *Nāma* (name) and *Rūpa* (form) of Gaṇeśa at the very first sight remind us of a *Ṛgvedic Agni Mantra "tvam hi satyo adbhuta"*(Thou art truth wonderful). Such is Gaṇeśa for us too.

First let us know Him by His name. The word Gaṇeśa consists of four letters, three consonants *Ga, Ṇa* and *Śa* and one vowel *E.* Even the ordinary dictionary meanings of these letters clearly indicate the extraordinary nature of the word that they constitute. *'Ga'* stands for a God, a singer or a knower. *Brahma* is the God of Absolute knowledge and *Vedas* are the song out of His breath. *'Ṇa'* means a decision or *Buddha,* the enlightened self and *'E'* is for

Viṣṇu. Thus these two as *'Ṇe'* stands for that *Avatāra* of Viṣṇu, the preserver of life, who with self-determination paved the path of truthful living in *Kaliyuga. 'Śa'* means a weapon or Śiva whose unique weapon, the *Triśūla* destroys all obstacles on the path of creative activity. Thus in the word Gaṇeśa we find all the three important Gods that are at the very root of this creation. So Gaṇeśa is a God singular *(Ekodevaḥ)* and complete *(Sampūrṇa Devatā)* to be worshipped for the success of every important work that we want to commence and execute. In Hindi the term 'Śrī Gaṇeśa' itself means to begin without hesitation. Success is assured as Gaṇeśa is wedded to Siddhi, the Goddess of success.

Again the word Gaṇeśa consists of two parts—*Gaṇa* and *Īśa. Gaṇa* means multitude and *Īśa*—the master. So Gaṇeśa is the leader of all the *Gaṇas* or groups of people. *Maruts, Nāgas, Bhūtas, Yakṣas* etc., were the *Gaṇas* of Śiva. When His son Kumāra or Kārtikeya was selected as *Deva Senāpati,* the commander of the gods, then Śiva nominated His other son Gaṇeśa as Gaṇapati, the leader of His *Gaṇas.* Gaṇeśa as *Gaṇādhyakṣa,* the spirit of unity and harmony amidst various communities, is the need of today for the progress of our *Gaṇatantra.*

The word *Gaṇa* also means numbers from one to infinity with which we count and measure. So Gaṇeśa means the master of numbers. Who is this Gaṇeśa over and above all numbers ? In all scales of measurements the counting begins from zero which is not a number. This naught, the greatest discovery of the Indian mind is *Śūnya* from which begins the game of all numbers. This immeasurable *Śūnya* is Gaṇeśa beyond all worldly measurements. As counting is done in time, this timeless symbol represents that part of our silent mind that is without measure. Thus the worship of Lord Gaṇeśa is to rise above selfishness, that part of our mind which is busy calculating and manipulating all the time.

Indian mythology is the storehouse of every experience and emotion of man, spread over a period of five thousand years or more. Still as a living part of our culture, it has always tended to

retain the earliest beliefs and has moulded them to fit in new social conditions. As such, Gods and their myths multiplied in spite of the effort to retain monotheistic approach over the existing polytheism. However strictly attached a sectarian devotee may be to his particular god *(Iṣṭadeva),* he tried to include other gods into his own system. *Vedas* speak of thirty-three gods, *Purāṇas* of thirty-three crore. Not the number but their grouping is significant. The one God "whom wise men address by different names" in time became *Trimūrti* to include Brahmā, the creator, Viṣṇu the preserver and Śiva, the destroyer. Later it was felt that the creation not only needs energy to maintain itself but also the successful use of it in the right direction. Thus two more, Pārvatī, the *Śakti* of Śiva and her son Gaṇeśa, were added to make the group of *Pañcadeva.* When *Brahmā* was replaced by Sūrya, the solar God, the group was called *Sūrya Pañcāyatana.*

Today a Hindu worships the one God of *Sahasranāma* (thousand names) in seven different ways taking into consideration not only the Gods of his family and community but also of the nation and the environment. Thus for the unity and harmony of the land and its people we worship—(1) Śiva, mostly as *Śivaliṅga;* (2) *Śakti* as Durgā in various forms; (3) Viṣṇu mostly as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa; (4) *Kuladevatā* or *Devī* belonging to the family, (5) *Grāmadevatā* or *Devī* belonging to the land including rivers, hills, trees, sun, moon etc., (6) Hanumān and (7) Gaṇeśa.

Except the last two, all other gods and goddesses like Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, etc., possess human form and face. The monkey has a better sense of territory to fight for its protection and the elephant is intelligent enough to find its way successfully against all odds. Therefore Hanumān, the monkey-god, is the God of India's territorial unity and Gaṇeśa, the elephant-God, of its cultural harmony. These two Gods saved *Sanātana Dharma* from annihilation. Though Gaṇeśa is the last to be discovered in the search of Gods, yet He tops the list as He shows the right path and grants success. There was a time when Gaṇeśa was placed on road

crossing as the path-finder. Still today there is a temple of *Sākṣī Vināyaka* in Varanasi as a witness of our journey towards self realization.

Like the *Ādityas,* Gaṇeśa is remembered by *Dvādaśaitāni Nāmāni* (twelve names), one for each month. Each god is worshipped on a particular *Tithi* or day. *Devī* Durgā is worshipped on *Aṣṭamī* and Skanda on *Ṣaṣṭhī.* The fourth day of either fortnight of every month is called *Vaināyakī* or *Gaṇeśa Caturthī.* Four signifies *Vedas, Varṇas, Āśramas, Puruṣārthas* etc., on which rests *Sanātana Dharma.* So Gaṇeśa is worshipped with a *Vrata* (vow) round the year on *Caturthī* to attain the four objects of life—*Dharma, Artha, Kāma* and *Mokṣa.* The *Pūjana* is for specific purpose and lasts for one and a half day, five or seven days. Out of many useful plants that are offered to Him, the most common is *Dūrvā,* the green lawn grass. Publicly Gaṇeśa is worshipped with great pomp and show on the fourth day of the bright fortnight of the month of *Bhādrapada,* which is considered as His birthday. About His birth it is said—"Pārvatī rubbed her body and out of the dirt thus collected, created a Vināyaka (meaning a special helper as well as an obstacle) and placed Him at the door instructing not to allow anyone to enter the house during her bath. When Śiva was refused admission, He in a fit of anger cut-off His head. Later to please Pārvatī He grafted an elephant's head and this Vināyaka became Gajānana. As elephant is the sign of intelligence, so Gaṇeśa was recognized as the God of wisdom.

It is mother earth that creates man out of her dust. As long as we keep this dirty head that is an obstacle by virtue of its being obstinate and selfish, Gaṇeśa is not born within us. We have to allow the unknown destroyer, Śiva to replace it by wisdom. This is the mind that is beyond the sphere of the known. The birth of Gaṇeśa within us, is the realization of the immeasurable *Saccidānanda.* Outwardly this is observed by making idol of Gaṇeśa out of clay and then worship Him collectively with enthusiasm and joy from *Caturthī* to *Caturdaśī,* when on that day

the *Mūrti* is immersed in water. Water denotes life which when mixed with clay makes it pliable to take up any form. This particular *Caturdaśī,* the fourteenth day of the bright fortnight of *Bhādrapada* is called *Ananta,* the infinity and thus signifies Gaṇeśa.

Gaṇeśa is also known by some other names out of which *Ucchiṣṭa* needs some attention. In the days of *Mantra* during sacrifice, offerings were made first to the fire (*Agni*) and then to the priest (Brahman). The residue called *Ucchiṣṭa* was thrown out. The fire and the priest denote the Vedic and the Brahmanic periods of early Aryan settlement. In time the established peaceful pattern got raptured partly due to the opposition of the *Śramaṇas* and partly due to the repeated invasions of the barbarians. During this period of chaos a change became inevitable. The state of *Mantra* was replaced by *Tantra. Ucchiṣṭa* means residue as well as imagination. A new pattern was woven out of imagination around the thrown out residue of the offerings of the ancient days. So far *Mokṣa* (liberation) depended on *Cittavṛtti Nirodha* and meditation. In *Tantra,* emphasis was given on direct experience to understand the movements of thought or *Cittavṛtti* before they were finally done away. Thus *Ucchiṣṭa* Gaṇeśa became the cause of all that came into existence. During this period the *Gaṇapatīya* cult spread throughout India and abroad as far as Indonesia. Behind Gaṇeśa the country gathered strength not only to face the challenge but also to remove the obstacles for prosperity and knowledge to flourish. The *Śaivas* and *Śāktas* easily accepted Gaṇeśa. *Vaiṣṇavas* also were brought under His influence. At the end of *Gaṇeśa Caturthī Kathā* Kṛṣṇa Himself was made to say— "O King! Do this *Vrata*....... Yudhiṣṭhira had observed this. He not only regained his lost kingdom but having lived happily gained *Svarga* also." During the *Paurāṇika* period *Gaṇeśa Gītā* and *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* helped all sections of Hindus to collect behind Gaṇeśa so as to regain the lost glory of *Sanātana Dharma* and its home. Gaṇeśa as Gaṇapati was supposed to be the *Vedic*

Brahmaṇaspati, the Lord of prayers.

Having discovered Gaṇeśa by His name, let us now understand Him by His form *(Rūpa).* He is fat with a very big belly and has a head that of an elephant with only one tusk. Each part of His figure conveys some message necessary for successful living. The one tusk points out to one pointedness of life's mission. Two big ears are to listen carefully to all and two narrow piercing eyes, to observe everything attentively. These qualities are essential for understanding. The long nose is the sign of prestige and honour to be kept high. The big belly is to accept every part of life in full. The four hands with *Śaṅkha, Cakra, Aṅkuśa* and *Kumudinī* represent the four objects of life to be achieved. Gaṇeśa is thus the personification of those qualities of life that help us to overcome difficulties on our path of life and be successful. Gaṇeśa's appearance reminds us of one who is happily placed undisturbed. This *Sthiti* is the state of being and is depicted by *Svastika (Su* meaning well and *Asti,* being) the sign of Gaṇeśa. This happy state of being enjoys *Modaka* (giver of pleasure). In this form we offer our becoming or *Gati* to Gaṇeśa. When the two states, of *Sthiti* and *Gati* merge, then there is nothing but the cosmic dance of creation. Like His father Śiva, the Naṭarāja, Gaṇeśa is also often shown dancing in ecstasy. Gaṇeśa is the Lord of *Buddhi* (wisdom) and *Siddhi* (success), hence the word *Śrī,* the sign of fortune and grandeur is added before His name—Śrī Gaṇeśa.

In picture Gaṇeśa is shown with *Mūṣaka,* a rat, as His *Vāhana* or carrier. A rat by the side of an elephant when compared, points out to the ultimate ends of a scale. This reminds us of a Vedic statement—"Smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest." While one is *Śūnya* the other is *Ananta.* These two are the basic concepts rooted in our *Dharma.* Gaṇeśa riding the *Mūṣaka* denotes *Paramātmā* in the *Ātmā,* the ultimate union of the individual consciousness with the universal. Moreover the rat succeeds in gnawing its way through all obstructions, so it symbolises Gaṇeśa's ability to get every obstacle destroyed.

Gaṇeśa is not accompanied by His *Vāhana* when He is with *Ṛṣi* Vyāsa, writing the *Mahābhārata.* It was agreed that Vyāsa would dictate without any hesitation or interruption and Gaṇeśa would write after fully understanding what He wrote. Gaṇeśa as a scribe wrote *Mahābhārata* without any break as He and Vyāsa were harmoniously engaged in the preparation of this encyclopedia of *Dharma.* The absence of *Mūṣaka* here points out that this book of wisdom is beyond the reach of criticism or any correction. *Purāṇa* says—"The marriage of *Adharma* (injustice) and *Hiṁsā* (violence) breeds *Anṛta* (falsehood) and *Nikṛti* (immorality)." This state comes when out of selfishness and ignorance, we loose sight of the path of *Dharma.* This is what we are facing today. None else can deliver us out of this state except Gaṇeśa, the scribe of *Mahābhārata,* who brought this fifth *Veda* within the easy reach of the common man's understanding.

Here it is worth noticing that there is no time involved between the thinking of Vyāsa and the writing of Gaṇeśa. When there is no interval in between perception and action then such an action is pure and perfect. If there is an interval between thinking and doing then however short the duration may be, the thought corrupts the action leading to *Adharma.*

In some pictures Lord Gaṇeśa is seen between two, Goddess—*Buddhi,* the mother of *Lābha* or *Yoga* and *Siddhi,* the mother of *Kṣema* or *Śubha.* This clearly points out that Gaṇeśa is that vital power within ourselves which when wedded to intelligence and enthusiasm, grants material as well as spiritual achievements. *Gaṇeśa Pūjana* has no meaning if it does not awaken the self to overcome all odds so as to gain the glory that we loose in time due to inner conflict and hesitation.

While in other religions there is only one God meaning the creator, in Hinduism the word is also used to denote some object, or an idea or a phenomenon. Since these gods took birth out of the imagination of man, they have lived with him and will continue to do so. They are called *Ajarāmaradeva*—the immortals. The only

difference is that some have not grown in time while the majority of them have evolved to become a part of our living culture. It is said that there are gods of the sky, of the *Antarikṣa* (atmosphere) and of the earth. As the manifestation is three dimensional, each god can be interpreted in three different ways. Between the sky and the earth there is the man. Let us discover Lord Gaṇeśa as He descends from the sky on the earth and then ascends within man to awaken his latent powers.

The seers and sages fascinated by the heavenly bodies gazed at the sky to observe all that was happening there night after night. In their observation they were seeking answers to the riddle of life. In the movements of the stars and the planets, they discovered *Dhruva, Sītā* and all those who became the centre of our mythological stories. There are some Vedic legends about the constellation *'Orion' (Mṛgaśirā).* There is some reference about *Hasticchāyā*, which seems to be related with the birth of Gaṇeśa. Giving the esoteric meaning of Gajānana, the elephant-headed God, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Aiyaṅgar remarks —"Just as either the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of *Bhādrapada* or the new moon day of that month, was considered to be the day of *Hasticchāyā,* the elephant's light by reason of the sun's conjunction with his own asterism *Hasta,* and as though he thereby became *Hastin,* elephant, having *Hasta* in the sense of proboscis, the fourth day of the bright fortnight of the same month seems in my opinion to have been instituted for the worship of the moon, metamorphosing him as the elephant-headed god by reason of that day being the latest day on which the moon of that month will have become elephant-headed by conjunction with the *Hasta* asterism." Life has changed to such an extent that today we hardly know about this phenomenon.

Like *Karvā Cautha, Gaṇeśa Cautha* was for the worship of the moon, but some people believe that they would be blamed of theft if they see the moon on that particular day. The story of *Syamantaka Maṇi* was to associate Kṛṣṇa, the most popular God then, with

Gaṇeśa. Moon is easily seen and thus we miss to see the starry beauty of the Orion. So it was said—"Don't look at the moon, see the beautiful elephant headed God formed by the heavenly bodies. Somehow we did not pay much attention to it as we were busy decorating and preparing our earthly Gaṇeśa for *Pūjana* and got stuck with the first half of the statement.

On earth there was a time when Buddhism captured the imagination of the masses and the whole of the Asia was influenced. Buddha whose name was also Vināyaka was the son of Mahāmāyā Devī and his birth was associated with a white elephant. Buddha, the enlightened one, was entitled to the first offering by the *Gaṇarājyas* of those days. Out of this historical fact a *Paurāṇika* story developed giving birth to Gaṇeśa. Pārvatī, the *Māyā Śakti* of Śiva, created Vināyaka to whom Śiva not only gave the head of an elephant but made Him Gaṇapati to be worshipped first on all occasions. Thus the birth of Gaṇeśa germinated the time-old seed of faith towards God in the hearts of those who had turned *Nāstika.* This checked the growth of *Śramaṇa Mata* and helped *Sanātana Dharma* to regain its lost glory.

What is in *Brahmāṇḍa* (macrocosm) is in the *Piṇḍa* (microcosm). The heavenly thirty-three gods are in this earthly human body. Seven *Dhātus* like the blood, the bone etc., are the *Vasugaṇas,* in which the life dwells. Ten organs and the mind are the eleven *Rudragaṇas* that cry and their craving makes us weep. The twelve months are the *Ādityagaṇas,* through which the life cycle moves year after year. The powerful Indra is the respiration which supplies energy to the *Indriyas* to function. *Prāṇa* is Prajāpati that keeps the body alive. As long as we are busy to please these *Gaṇas* in spite of all our achievements, we are victims of the phenomenon of pleasure and pain. The Lord of these *Gaṇas* is Gaṇeśa, the *Ātmā* within. When this is realized then the bliss and blessings come of their own accord. Hence the worship of Gaṇeśa is beyond the seeking of earthly pleasures in the service of mankind through self-knowledge.

Mythology that was to explain natural phenomena became a symbolic language to explain philosophical ideas. Because of social changes the myths were moulded accepting primitive beliefs and deities to weave a new pattern. This has linked us with the past. The much disturbed present state seriously demands our attention for the survival of our culture. Let us pay timely attention to our religious symbols and cultivate those virtues for which they stand. The habitual worship of symbols is not going to resolve the crisis.

Now let us have a last look at Gaṇeśa, who got transformed from *Vighneśa* to *Vighnahara.* According to *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* the elephant headed godling is a demon who hinders in the work of men. There were other malignant spirits called Vināyakas, sons of Ambikā. All such early concepts were put together as Gaṇapati Vināyakas and in due course of time they all together were turned into Gajānana Gaṇeśa, the giver of wealth, well being and wisdom. This paradox of *Vighna (Tama)* and *Vighnahara (Jyoti)* is a reality to be faced. Afraid of *Tama* (darkness) we run away from it to seek *Jyoti* (light) by all those methods that are known. As no known process can lead to the unknown, we have only to prepare ourselves for *Jyoti* to come by facing *Tama.* There is no other way but to surrender our selfish ego to the unknown that comes. As long as *Paramātmā* does not ascend in the *Ātmā,* we are *Vighneśa,* obstacles on the path of universal life. When that transformation happens then *Vighnahara* not only shows us the path of truthful living but safely leads us too. When the conditioned mind surrenders then the enlightened *Ātmā* is graced by the presence of Lord Gaṇeśa, the mind without measure, opening the treasure of life.

The invitation-cards of social ceremonies are invariably printed with the figure of Gaṇeśa. Some are within a circle or a square. Others are in the form of *Svastika* or *Śrī* while many of them are beautifully decorated with colours, a few are just half a dozen red patches to suggest Gaṇeśa. As Hanumān, the God of India's territorial unity, appears to me in the form of *Oṁkāra,* the source of

Sanātana Dharma. I visualise Gaṇeśa the God of our cultural harmony in the map of India of my (prepartition) school days. The Indian peninsula is the elephantine nose of Gaṇeśa with Kerala and Tamil as its tips that hold the glory and honour of this *Dharmadeśa* high. Cylone (Sri Lanka) is the *Modaka* and Islands of either sides are fragments of the garland. Kathiawar is the *Ekadanta* and Chilka represents the spot from where the other tusk was cut off by Paraśurāma. The deltas of Sindhu and Gaṅgā are the two eyes that have seen the rise of *Dharma* from *Vedas* and *Purāṇas* in their valleys. The frontier hills of Balucha and Assam are the two ears that heard the foot-steps of coming storms. The ground of Kurukshetra that divides the indo-gangetic plain, is the third eye that met those stormy upheavals and calmed them. The Vindhya ranges are the *Tripuṇḍa* and Himalaya is the silvery crown on the head of Gaṇeśa with Gaurīśaṅkara (everest) as the crescent (moon). Let us serve this Gaṇeśa simultaneously realizing Him within ourselves. At the end, let us join together in praise of the Lord in the words of *Gaṇeśastava*—"Thou art the cause of this world, the primal knowledge, the origin of gods, the origin of bliss, the source of abilities (*Guṇa*) the leader of communities (*Gaṇa*). Thou pervadest the universe and art worshipped by all. Thou art the one God of gods, verily the Supreme *Brahma.* To Thee, O Gaṇeśa, do we offer our worship."

When a person does not desire pleasures nor is he perturbed while experiencing pain; equally detached from liking and aversion then he is called to be the man of a stable intellect. Just as a tortoise shrinks all its limbs within itself, similarly when a person withdraws his sense-organs completely from their respective objects, he becomes a *Yogī.* He becomes free from the attraction towards the sense-object but the relish of them still persists. This relish too vanishes after realising *Brahma.*

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (I. 54—56)

Gaṇeśa: Harmonizer of the Mundane and the Spiritual

—*Dr. R. N. Vyas*

Indian philosophical thinking had always been quite liberal. While the other religions could not rise to the thought that there is only one single Real which is conceived in various forms by the worshippers in the light of their likings and ways of thinking even by this time. The oldest book of India, the *Ṛgveda* declared—"The ultimate is One; but the learned persons conceive it variously" (*ekaṁ sad viprā bahudhā vadanti).*

The Indians have therefore, many gods who are merely the different names assigned to the one single real. The infinite appears in infinite varieties before infinite number of individuals. As Kālidāsa has stated "people have divergent likings" *(bhinnarucirhi lokaḥ).* Hence, no restriction of name and form in the realm of worship, is desirable. But it has never to be forgotten that whatever the name, the ultimate truth is one. Divergence of names should not lead us to think that the gods are different. Even if one worships Devī or Gaṅgā or the Narmadā or Viṣṇu or Śiva, one, in fact, worships the supreme godhead.

The Western people cannot understand it. They look to the different names and rush to the conclusion that Indians are believers in polytheism. To correct this mistake Max Muller has coined a new word viz., 'Henotheism' to describe the real nature of Indian worship. An Indian worshipper extols his God as the Supreme God, the only God. Therefore, it is in fact, monotheism. That is why the personal God of an Indian, is only an aspect of the Impersonal Absolute. Let us think about Gaṇeśa in this context.

Gaṇeśa is the god of wisdom and success, prosperity and happiness, opulence and magnificence. Our temporal life needs all these in ample measure. Hindu religion gives due importance to mundane life. Body is the temple of the immortal spirit. It needs all those comforts which make life enjoyable. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II *Anuvāka*) accepts food as the *Brahma annaṁ brahmopāsate.* Here food represents the entire material world. Universe is a manifestation of the real. Hence, everything here has some reality. The mundane and the spiritual are not to be treated as separate entities. They form one integral whole. Lord Gaṇeśa is a symbol of this very harmony between the mundane and the spiritual.

Śrī Gaṇapati Atharvaśīrṣa declares this very fact. "Lord, You are the *Brahma*..... You are *Sat-Cit-Ānanda*........The whole universe has emerged from You. It is maintained by You. It is lost in You in the end.......You are Brahmā, You are Viṣṇu, You are Rudra......"

Gaṇeśa has the head of an elephant. This big head suggests that His thinking capacity is bigger than that of any person. His big ears suggest that He is a patient hearer. All the grievances reach Him. His trunk suggests that He can get things done as per His own desire—whether it is the toughest or the tenderest.

Two tusks represent good and evil, *Śreyas* and *Preyas,* spiritually elevating and spiritually degrading tendencies. Discrimination is possible only when these two factors are present.

The big belly suggests that He can digest everything. Śiva drank poison for the sake of the welfare of the universe. But even that poison could not harm Him. The presence of *Modakas* (sweets) suggests that if a person has spiritual basis, the world cannot but be sweet for Him, because no event can upset Him. Lord Gaṇeśa rides over mouse suggesting thereby that those elements which destroy human welfare, cannot succeed if Gaṇeśa is pleased. Gaṇeśa is too strong and bulky for any type of obstacle in the path of human welfare.

Gaṇeśa is the son of Śiva and Pārvatī who are embodiments of

welfare and strength. Philosophically, Śiva is the *Brahma* and Pārvatī is its *Māyā Śakti.* Gaṇeśa is the power which helps every worshipper to do his job without the danger of any kind of failure. Worship of Gaṇeśa implies generation of faith that nobody can hamper the path of one's success if the grace of the Lord is invoked.

Gaṇeśa's form is non-human. This implies that no human form can be found adequate to symbolize the God of success. Just as no words can describe the ultimate truth, in the same way, no symbol can express the supreme. This has been expresssed very wisely and mystically through the form of Gaṇeśa.

The worship of Gaṇeśa at the beginning of every sacred occasion like a marriage ceremony, implies that one should not be negligent about mundane prosperity even if one aims at spiritual truth. The principal objectives of human life are *Dharma, Artha, Kāma,* and *Mokṣa.* They imply a cohesion of worldly prosperity with spiritual maturity. Lord Gaṇeśa is the bestower of *Artha* and *Kāma* which are to be used for the ultimate objective of liberation. Body and spirit both have to be given nourishment. Gāndhī had rightly declared 'God shall have to appear before a hungry person only in the form of bread.' A hungry man cannot think about God. Gaṇeśa is the power that bestows prosperity to enable a person to walk steadily on the path of spiritual perfection.

In this context I will like to quote the following words of Plato—"I wonder if we could contrive......some magnificent myth that would in itself carry conviction to our whole community" (Republic, Bk 3, 414). Even if Gaṇeśa is supposed to be a myth, it is a myth that can bring happiness and creative conviction to a human heart. It has rightly been declared that the just live by faith.

In this context, it will be worthwhile to remember *Narasiṁha* form of godhead. *Narasiṁha* has the head of a lion. He is the destroyer of the oppressors of devotees. When Prahlāda was extremely tortured by demon Hiraṇyakaśipu, his own father, it was necessary for God to destroy the oppressor.

In my opinion both the forms of godhead viz., Gaṇapati and

Narasiṁha are complementary in nature. World needs both opulence as well as the destruction of those elements who terrorise the virtuous people. God Gaṇeśa bestows riches and prosperity *Māṅgalya* and good luck and removes the obstacles that lie in the way of their attainment. But if the oppression reaches the extreme Narasiṁha should be prayed to eliminate the oppressor totally.

Faith is the salt of life. The *Bhagavadgītā* declares that there is no person who is totally devoid of faith. The point is that *Sāttvika* type of faith yields prosperity and bounty, while *Tāmasika* type of faith gives a spirit of destructive pleasure. A person having *Sāttvika* faith shall get the blessings of Gaṇapati and Narasiṁha which will make his worldly life full of pleasures and happiness and free from the dangers of every type of trouble-making and destructive element.

Thus a person pursuing a religious life in the real sense of the term is guaranteed full assurance of a meaningful mundane life. Where there is righteousness, there dwells victory "*yato dharmastato jayaḥ*". "*dharmādarthaśca kāmaśca sa dharmaḥ kiṁ na sevyate.*" *Dharma* gives riches as well as satisfaction of mundane desires. It is surprising that even then *Dharma* is not practised by some people. This is the view of Veda Vyāsa.

Shall we attend to this very sagacious advice of the greatest sage of all times in our own interests ?

केवलं वेदमाश्रित्य कः करोति विनिर्णयम्।
बलवान् लौकिको वेदाल्लोकाचारश्च कस्त्यजेत्॥

"Only based on Vedic rulings who can decide what to do and what not to do or what is religious or irreligious? The social traditions are more powerful than Vedic rulings. Who can overrule the social traditions and who can dare giving them up?"

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (VII. 49)

Satya Vināyaka Vrata
(The story of Sudāmā as in Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa)

Sūta spoke to the Ṛṣis—

Once *Devarṣi* Nārada, his heart melting to see the pitiable plight of the people in this mortal world, went to Lord Brahmā, his father and asked him if there was any easy way to remove their suffering and make them happy. Brahmā replied that only Lord Vināyaka, who is the Supreme Reality, the Lord of lords, praised by the *Vedas,* who is *Oṁkāra,* the *Praṇava* incarnate, is the directly and promptly bestower of auspicious results, more pai iicularly in this age of *Kali.* Once the same question was raised by goddess Pārvatī to Lord Śiva. I am going to tell you what the Lord said to Pārvatī.

The Lord said that in this regard, there is a very popular story. In the remote past, there lived a very poor brahmin named Sudāmā, a gentle, generous and extremely pious, a person completely surrendered to the will of God. His wife was a chaste woman and a suitable match to her husband.

One day while conversing with her husband, she said to him— "Why don't you go to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, your old friend? You say that both of you were fast friends in your school days, He would certainly remove our poverty." Convincing her husband by such arguments she sent Śrī Sudāmā to the capital of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She somehow managed a few fistfuls of rice as a token of present to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Sudāmā reached Dvaraka. He was most cordially received by Śrī Kṛṣṇa and was entertained with great affection. After meals both the friends sat together and started chit-chatting. During the course of conversation, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, inquisitive of the intention of

Sudāmā behind his coming to Him by the way, made an enquiry about the routine engagement of Sudāmā and how he pulled on with his family. Sudāmā offered his present of rice to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and He in turn enjoyed a fistful of that. It was sufficient to appease Him. He decided in the mind to remove Sudāmā 's poverty and make him like a king. Śrī Kṛṣṇa thought in His mind that only by the grace of Lord Vināyaka, he could be converted into a king from this miserable condition and He again asked Sudāmā if there was everything alright with him. Sudāmā said that everything is bound to be alright with him who depends upon You. When You maintain and sustain the entire world it is no use to ask such questions about Your friend. My friend, O the best among the *Yadus*, I maintain myself with whatever I get without begging. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said—"It is of course very good to depend upon what a Brahman gets unasked for. But I will suggest you to worship Lord Vināyaka quite selflessly and without any worldly desire. You should make a complete surrender to the Lord and that will bestow upon you the worldly requirements and finally you will be liberated from the shackles of your past actions. Sudāmā made an eager inquiry about who that Lord Vināyaka was and how to worship and propitiate Him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said—"He is the beginning of creation, a causeless cause of every effect, worthy of being worshipped by everybody, Supreme Being Himself, whom the gods like Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva worship with faith and reverence and the *Yogīs* practise their *Yoga* to get His blessings and He is Satyavināyaka, the God of gods. My friend, do perform His vow and get the desired fruits immediately. This vow of Satyavināyaka is most beneficent to the world particularly in this *Kaliyuga* it is more fruitful and can be performed with simple efforts. After that Sudāmā wanted to know in what month and on what date this vow should be commenced and what is the proper procedure and the possible result of this vow. In the past who were the people who performed this vow and what fruits they individually got. For my benefit and for the benefit of all mortal beings, please do tell me the details of this vow.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa most delightfully started enlightening Sudāmā on the point. He said—"Lord Puṣṭipati-Vināyaka was incarnated on the full moon day of *Vaiśākha*. On that day or on the day of *Varadā Caturthī* or any Tuesday or Friday this vow should be performed. If there is any urgency one can do it on any auspicious day and time. It is necessary that one should get up early in the morning and should prepare an unguent of sesamum seeds and *Āmalā* (a tree of myrobalan family) and smearing and massaging His body with that unguent should take his bath and then perform his daily routine like *Sandhyā, Tarpaṇa* etc. He should again take bath at the time of dusk, should perform *Puṇyāhavācana* and should worship the presiding deities of nine planets. After that besmearing the worship ground with cowdung and making a beautiful *Raṅgolī* (a square design) planting banana plants on all the four corners a *Maṇḍapa* should be made and decorated with garlands of fragrant flowers. In the centre of that one *Kalaśa* (a jar full of water) should be placed. Over that a *Yantra* having four doors on the four sides should be placed. On that *Yantra* Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Umā-Maheśvara, Pṛthvī-Varāha and Śakti-Madana—these four couples should be invoked and stationed starting from east to south, to west and to north respectively. One should take permission from his preceptor and should make an eight-petalled lotus with *Aṣṭagandha (Keśara, Kastūrī, Kuṁkuma, Karpūra, Agara, Tagara,* red sandal and white sandal). If these are not available only red sandal can be used. The material to be used for worship should be purified by sprinkling water with pronouncing prescribed *Mantras*. The image of Satyavināyaka should be placed on the centre of the *Aṣṭadala Kamala* (eight-petalled lotus). Without any pomp and show but at the same time without being miserly, with full faith and reverence, accompanied with *Vaidika* or *Paurāṇika Mantras*, one should worship Satya Vināyaka with sixteen materials of worship. The coarse ground flour of wheet (*Sūjī*), sugar and thickened milk (*Khoyā*); mixed in proper proportion and fried in ghee—out of this *Modaka* should be made. Apart from this the other varieties of

cooked food as his resources permit, should be offered to the Lord to be followed by an offering of seasonal fruits. Then pure water should be given to God to wash His mouth and face as well. In the end *Puṣpāñjali* of *Śamī* and *Mandāra* flowers alongwith *Dūrvā* should be offered and salutation should be made by lying prostrate before Him.

Then comes the turn of *Brahman Pūjā*. The pious and worthy brahmans should be selected for this purpose. The *Yajamāna* (sacrificer) himself should wash their feet and worship them with sandal paste, flowers, clothes and *Dakṣiṇā*. Ladies whose husbands are alive, should be offered turmeric powder and *Kuṁkuma* and they should be honoured. Then brahmans should be feasted according to one's financial capacity. After that the *Yajamāna* alongwith his family-members, should take food as the *Prasāda* of Satyavināyaka. The worshipper and his family must awake throughout the night engaged in singing, dancing and chanting *Kīrtana*. One who performs the vow this way, is immediately rewarded. Those who perform the vow with selfish motive and for worldly desires get the desires fulfilled. They get riches, foodgrains, animals, wife, progeny, long life, good health, praise and honour and knowledge. Those who perform this vow selflessly without any desire, get salvation.

Brahmā started his creation work only after performing this vow. Śakti-Vināyaka provided him with the capacity required. Viṣṇu also did perform this vow in order to get power for maintaining and sustaining the universe. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said—"I also performed the same vow for taking incarnations according to My wish and I got this power. Every Friday, My family priest comes to My house in order to get the vow performed by Me. You please stay here till that time. Gargācārya will come and you can get yourself well informed of the mode of this worship take the *Prasāda* and then go to your place." Sudāmā stayed there most happily. Next day when the sage Garga came, he learnt the means and methods of performing this vow from him. In the evening when *Prasāda* was

being distributed, Sudāmā made a firm mental determination to perform this vow after reaching home. He ate the *Prasāda* and in the company of Śrī Kṛṣṇa kept awake whole night with a pure heart full of devotion and worshipped Satyavināyaka.

Its a common knowledge that when Sudāmā reached home everything was changed there. His hut was converted into a golden mansion. He was astonished to see this change. There were so many other persons who performed this vow and got their conditions transformed altogether. The stories given in *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* are just on the pattern of *Satya Nārāyaṇa Vrata Kathā* of *Skanda Purāṇa.* Only names of persons and places are different.

When Gaṇeśa won the race while Kumāra Kārtikeya was still on the way circumambulating, Prajāpati came to Lord Śiva and put up a proposal to him for the marriage of his two daughters Siddhi and Buddhi with Gaṇeśa which Lord Śiva happily accepted. Gaṇeśa was pleased to hear the news of his marriage.

When Kārtikeya was still on the way *Devarṣi* Nārada informed him about the tidings in the Śiva family. He was very much disheartened for missing the chance and he made no secret of it. He made a fuss and even after arguments and convincing by Lord Śiva he decided to bid good bye to his parents and left Kailasa. He went to mountain Krauñca. He decided never to marry. Since then he was known as Kumāra (bachelor).

— *Compiled*

त्वं वाङ्मयस्त्वं चिन्मयः। त्वमानन्दमयस्त्वं ब्रह्ममयः। त्वं सच्चिदानन्दाद्वितीयोऽसि। त्वं प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मासि। त्वं ज्ञानमयो विज्ञानमयोऽसि॥

"You are alphabetical sound. You are consciousness personified. You are bliss and knowledge (*Brahma*) personified. You are *Sat, Cit* and *Ānanda.* You are one without the second. You are *Brahma.* You are the embodiment of knowledge mundane and spiritual."

—*Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣopaniṣad*

Lord Gaṇeśa in Foreign Countries

It's a well established fact that Gaṇeśa-worship in India is very ancient. Undoubtable proofs are available that *Gaṇeśa Pūjā* was prevalent in India during the life time of Jesus Christ or even before. When the Buddhist monks crossed the Indian boundary and went to other countries which were sometimes known as greater India, in the East it was Burma, Sumatra, Bali, Java etc., in the North, Nepal, Tibet and China, in the West countries like Chinese Turkistan etc., are the countries where they took their religion, with them. These monks propagated Gaṇeśa-worship also. The images and paintings of Gaṇeśa in foreign countries can be divided in two categories. In some of them Gaṇeśa has been depicted as a horrible demon and overpowered by Buddhist gods and goddesses in this way or that. In others Gaṇeśa has been shown as a deity to be worshipped and several temples were erected as centres of Gaṇeśa-worship. With the advancement of excavation work, proofs of *Gaṇeśa Pūjā* in the antiquity are coming into the light every now and then.

In Nepal *Nṛtya Gaṇapati* is common and supposed to be adorable.

Janakapur—

In this town there are two renowned temples. They are not Gaṇeśa temples. One of them is dedicated to Jānakījī. It was got built on behalf of the queen of Tikamgarha and the other was built by king of Nepal. It is dedicated to Lord Rāma. Within the boundary of Rāma temple there is an image of Lord Gaṇeśa which is supposed to be *Siddha*.

Phulahara—

It is situated ten miles away from Janakapur. It is a common belief that this place was formerly the flower garden of king Janaka and it is here itself that Rāma and Jānakī saw each other for the first time. Here Sītā worshipped goddess Girijā and offered her prayer to. There is an image of Lord Gaṇeśa within the premises of this Rāma Jānakī temple.

Bhatagaon—

This is eight miles away from Kathmandu and is one of the three capitals of the olden royal dynasty of Mewar. Here there is a temple exclusively for Gaṇeśa which is known as *Sūryavināyaka Gaṇeśa* temple. In the front of the temple there is a *Stūpa* (monument) on the top of which a lotus has been engraved. Over that lotus there is a mouse, the vehicle of Lord Gaṇeśa. To the left side there is a big bell and so many small bells by the side of it.

Gorkha—

In the West Nepal in Gorkha there is a Gorakhanātha temple. Close to it, a Gaṇeśa temple is there which is very famous. This image is counted among the most famous Gaṇapati images of Nepal. The natives of Gorkha call Him *Vijaya Gaṇapati* or *Kāmanā Gaṇeśa*.

The *Nṛtya Gaṇapati* of Nepal is of red hue standing on His vehicle, the mouse. Under the teeth of the mouse there is the gem called *Cintāmaṇi* and it is green in colour. This Gaṇapati has three eyes and a crown made of *Cintāmaṇi* on His head. As usual this *Nṛtya Gaṇapati* has twelve arms. Among His hands there are many objects, emblems and weapons generally recognised by the *Tantra* system. They are just like the images of this type found in India. Only a minor difference is found. In one of His hands, He is holding a small boy and in another hand, instead of *Modaka*, He is having *Cintāmaṇi*. Another difference is in the form of the garland of skulls in His neck. Apart from that there are numerous paintings of the Lord Gaṇeśa found in Nepal at different places.

Tibet—

Like Nepal Gaṇeśa was not so fortunate in Tibet to gain

popularity. As a matter of fact Tibet was swept away by *Mahāyāna* Buddhists and they were quite successful in pushing out Hindu gods and goddesses from Tibet. In the Western Tibet several Gajānana images are found but they do not seem to occupy a position of a prominently adorable deity. It seems that Gaṇeśa was supposed to protect the people from evil spirits and demons. No doubt He was considered to be a most strong and powerful deity. In the temples of Tibet the services of Gaṇeśa are taken to keep the door and His images are installed at the main gates of the temples.

In Nirmanda, Tābo, Gelugpā etc., there are Gaṇeśa images with a slight difference from one to the other. In some of the places which were strongly influenced by *Mahāyāna* branch of Buddhists, the Gaṇeśa images, somewhat broken have been shown overpowered by some Buddhist god or goddess.

Burma—

In Burma, Siam and Indo-China small Gaṇeśa images have been found in huge numbers. They are built according to the Hindu style. It seems that the Vedic Hindus, in the ancient past when came to these countries, they must have brought alongwith them these images for their domestic worship. These people must have been either merchants or religious missionaries that is Brahmans. Burma was largely populated by Buddhists who were bitter enemies of Hindu deities. But these images tell a different tale. Possibly in the early centuries of Christ, may be even fifth, sixth or seventh, the Hindu missionaries succeeded in planting their legs on this soil. These innumerable images prove the fact that Hindu deities were adored with faith and reverence in Burma. Here also it is quite noticeable that not only Gaṇeśa but many other Hindu gods and goddesses are installed in the Buddhist monastries by the side of main gate as door-keepers. In certain places Indian merchant community used to worship Gaṇeśa as obstacle-remover and was known in the native language as Mahāpiyena. Here Gaṇeśa-images are not artistic and lovely to look at. But in Pagana there is a broken image of Lord Gaṇeśa in a Vedic temple. It's a stone image and is

of exceptional quality. This Gaṇeśa is seated on a bit higher seat. The posture of this image is that of *Mahārāja Līlā*. Its eyes are like those of Indian images. He wears a crown which in the front side looks like a diadem.

Thailand—

The Thai people are from the Mangolian breed but they were and still are very much influenced by Vedic system. Here Gaṇeśa is equally adored by the Hindus as well as Buddhists. Yet, Gaṇeśa-image could not find a place in the *sanctum sanctorum* of Buddhist monastries. Gaṇeśa was a very popular deity in this country. A large number of small Gaṇeśa images are found and they were made by the native craftsmen called Āyuthians. Who belonged to Ayuthia perhaps a localized name of Ayodhya the then capital of the Thai kings. These images have got a style of their own. In Bangkok in a Hindu temple there is a Gaṇeśa-image made of five metals. It has its own speciality and is made on Khmer style. In His right hand we can see a broken tusk just like holder pen and in His left hand there is a book written on palm leaves.

Vietnam—

In Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, they had a very old book where there are six sketches of Gaṇeśa. The speciality of these sketches are this that God Gaṇeśa is ornamented from toes to the tuft which is a new finding. Lord Gaṇeśa has six hands. In His right uppermost hand He holds an elephant a small one. That elephant has innumerable heads. In the right middle hand another elephant is there which has three heads. In the lowermost right hand there is a conch. In the upper left hand He holds an elephant having three heads. In the left middle hand three elephants with one head each and in the lowermost He holds a conch.

Indo-China—

Combodia is very rich so far as historical statues are concerned. In Combodia also like Burma and Thailand small statues of Lord Gaṇeśa are found in large number. People used to worship Lord Śiva but Gaṇeśa was also popular though not like Śiva. The

Combodian name of Lord Gaṇésa is Prahakanesa. Here in this country the artists perhaps did not like His large belly so in Combodia we do not find the *Lambodara* form of Gaṇeśa.

In Kandala a remarkable statue of Lord Gaṇeśa is found. It might belong to eighth century A. D. or even earlier. It is in a sitting pose and more or less in *Padmāsana*. This type of image is found nowhere else. In former Ankoria there is another Gaṇeśa image. It is a class in itself and perhaps it is the only image of its style available so for. The most remarkable feature of this image is, its four hands with conch and discus etc.—the emblems of Lord Viṣṇu and not of a God of Śiva family.

In Kandala itself there is a privately managed museum. There, a Gaṇeśa image having four heads, can even now be seen. It's an image made of five metals in a sitting pose. This image has got only two arms. In both the hands Lord Gaṇeśa is holding some unidentifiable objects. It is built on neither Indian style nor Khmer but on Thai style.

Champa—

Like Combodia, Champa also seems to have been a country largely worshipping Lord Śiva. In 'क्वाङ्गनाम' and 'मि-सोअन' near a *Śaiva* temple there is an image of Gaṇeśa in standing pose. It's very impressive and matchless in its maturity of art. This also may probably belong to seventh or eighth century. It is rather difficult to come to a decision whether Gaṇeśa was woshipped here as an independent deity or a member of *Śaiva* family or a *Gaṇa* of Lord Śiva. The number of Gaṇeśa statues in Combodia is almost negligible. In 'मि-सोअन' itself another statue is remarkably important. In one of its hands there is something like a pen and it has been raised above. If it is a writing instrument like pen, it can be safely concluded that Gaṇeśa was popularly known as a scriber even in this remote part of the world.

Java—

The *Saṁskṛta* name of Java is 'यवद्वीप'. The mention of 'यवद्वीप' is made in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. In Java there is no Gaṇeśa temple at all

but as the son of Lord Śiva, He finds a place almost in every Śiva temple. In the British Museum of Java, we find a Gaṇeśa image but finding one or two images is not a conclusive proof. So, it can be assumed that *Gaṇeśa Pūjā* was not popular in Java. However in place like 'दिआंग' some Gaṇeśa images of different shape and size can be seen.

Bali—

In Bali five gods were worshipped. Particularly in eighth century,Shaivismwas a dominating religion. One can find a huge number of Nandī temples. Śiva, Pārvatī and Gaṇeśa were popularly worshipped there is no doubt, but there was Gaṇeśa cult as such, is quite doubtful.

In one of the British Museums there is a Gaṇeśa image belonging to possibly eighth century A. D. which is remarkable. It's a four-armed image with a large belly and a triangular cloth piece in the neck. It is considered to have migrated either from China or Indo-China.

Borneo—

There is an inscription in 'कोटेई' which proves that Vedic religion was in existence in Borneo. The antiquity of this inscription goes to fifth century A. D. or even before and several Gaṇeśa images have been discovered at different places.

Ceylon—

About one hundred and fifty miles away from Columbo, in a village there is a temple of Kārtikeya. In this temple Gaṇeśa occupies an independent place and even today he is worshipped on a thoroughly Vedic pattern. Here *Gaṇeśa Mūrti* is of black stone, four-armed approximately three feet high. Near this image, there is another Gaṇeśa image of white Mandāra approximately six inches high. The people even from far of places and remote corners assemble here in the month of July. The deity is worshipped three times a day in the morning at 5 O'clock, in midday and in the evening at 7.

China—

In China also Gaṇeśa-worship came alongwith Buddhist

missionaries but only as a deity subsidiary to Buddhist gods and goddesses. Mostly Gaṇeśa has been shown as an undesirable god, crushed under the feet of Buddhist gods.

Japan—

A Chinese monk went to Ceylon. He became a disciple to a Ceylonese *Yogī*, Amoghavajra. A Japanese learnt the mystic practices from the Chinese and he originated a new cult in Japan. There he built two elephant images embracing each other with their trunks. This was the form of the deity to be worshipped. In Japan, at the gate of temple, there is a deity like Gaṇeśa engraved which is locally known as 'Neo'. 'कोगोडाइशी' a Japanese monk took *Tāntrika* literature in Japan and alongwith Buddhist *Tāntrika* gods Gaṇeśa also migrated. 'कोगोडाइशी' had described about how to build Gaṇeśa images and what their shape and size should be. He prescribes that Gaṇeśa image should not be more than twenty-two inches tall. According to him in the outer wall of every temple there should be four Gaṇeśa images installed—one in each quarter. In the western wall it is named as 'वज्रवासित् वज्र'. There should be bow and arrow in His hand. In the eastern side the image is named 'चिन्ह' holding umbrella in the hand. In the southern side it is 'वज्रभक्षण' holding in the hand a garland of flowers and in the northern side 'वज्रमुख' holding sword in His hand. These four, are the four different forms of Vināyaka supposedly protectors of the four quarters. Gaṇeśa in the form of obstacle-remover or Vināyaka was popularly worshipped in Japan.

Mexico—

In Mexico the Red Indians even now worship a therianthropic deity having the face of an elephant and rest of the body of a human being. That is exactly a replica of Gaṇeśa of India. There are certain other temples also. Just before a few months the Gaṇeśa temple has been erected and *Aṣṭottaraśatadhārā Kumbhābhiṣeka* ceremony was celebrated in Ohio (U. S. A.).

Elephant has best memory

Ganesh — OM

Presiding diety of Muladhar cakra

Śrī Gaṇeśa—Anatomical Structure and Emblems

—*Lt. Col. R. K. Langar*

Śrī Gaṇeśa is one of the five principal deities of Hindus. Śrī Gaṇeśa has a universal appeal and is worshipped not only in India but in other countries also like Burma, Thailand, Combodia, Nepal, Tibet, China, Indonesia and Japan. Even Buddhists and Jains worship Śrī Gaṇeśa. In *Rāmāyaṇa* even Lord Rāma invoked Śrī Gaṇeśa before going to the woods. According to mythology Śrī Gaṇeśa is the eldest son of Lord Śiva and Goddess Pārvatī and is known as Vighneśvara the remover of obstacles and inertia. He is known by many other names like *Gajānana* (elephant-faced), *Lambodara* (pendant bellied), *Lamba Karṇa* (large-eared), *Ekadanta, Vakratuṇḍa, Siddhi Vināyaka* (bestower of *Siddhis)*. He is the embodiment of power and wisdom. He is bestower of virtuous qualities and success in all undertakings. Śrī Gaṇeśa represents *Om* which explains the practice of invoking Him before any rite because nothing can be done before uttering *Om*. According to *Tantras* Śrī Gaṇeśa is the presiding deity of the *Mūlādhāra Cakra* the psychic centre of the body in which *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* resides. *Mūlādhāra* the fountain head is a centre of evolutionary energy located at the base of spinal column. The anatomical structure of Śrī Gaṇeśa and the emblems He carries, have special significance for the mankind as they teach as how to live in this world. We shall study their symbolism as related to human life.

Śrī Gaṇeśa has gigantic figure with an elephant head and a huge pot belly but His mount is a tiny rat. Among the animals of the world rat is a lowly animal while elephant is huge and is regarded as a symbol of strength and wisdom. Its trunk which can remove

heaviest of road blocks symbolises great strength while its massive head represents a highly expanded state of consciousness. The combination of rat and elephant represent two aspects of human consciousness, the lowest represented by rat and expanded consciousness represented by elephant. Man has aspiration for higher life as well as temptation for lower existence. These are the two opposing forces in him. Man is restless like a rat running about here and there guided by impulses. Man generally prefers to stay at his lowest state of consciousness like a rat—impulsive, nervous and fearful—but has also trails of elephant like power and wisdom which usually remain latent but can be manifested with effort. The choice lies with the man to decide his course of action. Śrī Gaṇeśa shows us the way. It is the human body of Śrī Gaṇeśa which connects the lowest state of consciousness to the highest. Śrī Gaṇeśa reminds us that a man can raise himself from the level of low consciousness to the highest consciousness through the medium of human body. Man has to evolve through his own efforts. The obstacle-removing power is within a man. He has to invoke it with a conscious effort. When the huge body of Śrī Gaṇeśa sits on rat, it shows that life evolves to its highest level from the lowest. Working through the human body, man can find highest expression.

In the sitting pose Śrī Gaṇeśa places one foot on the ground while the other foot is lifted and placed close to the thigh. The foot on the ground denotes the earthly life which a man lives while the foot near the thigh indicates the spiritual freedom which one should attain while living in the world. The two different positions of Śrī Gaṇeśa's feet suggest to us that one should live a full life on earth but at the same time one should not forget the transitoriness of earthly life and try to evolve to the glory of spiritual freedom. Śrī Gaṇeśa reminds us that while living on earth we should free ourselves from the grip of materialism by fixing our goal of attaining perfection always in sight. If a man develops burning desire for God-realization, his desire for sensual pleasures will cease automatically.

Pot belly of Śrī Gaṇeśa suggests that a self composed man can digest anything whatever the life and environment offers him. The perfect man is like an ocean in which all rivers enter but the ocean does not overflow. Pleasures and pains of the world will have no impact on him. The perfect man will consume everything without showing any reactions outwardly. Even inwardly he will be at peace with himself, Śrī Gaṇeśa teaches that one should not be disturbed by the pairs of opposite.

Śrī Gaṇeśa holds sweets *(Laḍḍūs)* in one of His hands and partakes it with His trunk. This indicates that a person living in the world should truly enjoy his life because it gives him the opportunity of self-unfoldment and broadens his outlook. The natural impulses are not to be suppressed by force but those are to be controlled with the application of will and discrimination. Our lower nature is not to be destroyed but it is to be divinised with the influence of our higher nature. A spiritual seeker should enjoy both temporal and spiritual happiness and with steady practice should shed material tendencies to gain perfection by expanding to higher consciousness.

In other two hands Śrī Gaṇeśa holds the noose in one and the goad in the other. The noose which is a loop with running knot, represents the nature of desires which entangle a man and deflect him from the path of perfection. When the noose is shown in the divine hand of Śrī Gaṇeśa, it suggests that the desires should be controlled by the noose of discrimination so that desires are refrained from running like wild horses. If one can control desires, one would be blessed with peace and prosperity with the grace of Śrī Gaṇeśa. In the other rear hand Śrī Gaṇeśa holds a hook which is a more powerful weapon than the noose. The hook is meant to tackle powerful emotions and passions. If the noose controls the horses the hook is meant to tackle the powerful elephants which are our emotions and passions. With constant practice of self-control,desires, emotions and passions can be tamed and then man finds his life more meaningful and joyous.

A serpent is often shown around the body of Śrī Gaṇeśa like a sacred thread. This suggests that the spiritual seeker during his *Sādhanā* gradually awakens the mighty evolutionary energy the *Kuṇḍalinī* within him. This energy remains there in a potential state as symbolised by *Kuṇḍalinī* or a coiled up sleeping serpent. When it is activated, the human consciousness expands. This is what *Vedānta* also declares that the man is potentially divine as his soul is a fraction of God and this divinity within a man has to be manifested by *Yoga*.

The right tusk of Śrī Gaṇeśa is broken and He holds the broken piece of His tusk in the right hand. This indicates that with concerted effort the man treading the path of perfection can break the grip of materialism and set himself free from all limitations. Such a person becomes *Jīvanmukta* or a liberated man while living in this world. Śrī Gaṇeśa holds the broken piece of the tusk in His right hand which symbolises a writing aid. This indicates that a perfect man will acquire immense creative powers to express his thoughts. Śrī Gaṇeśa is said to have written down the *Mahābhārata* dictated by Vyāsa.

Śrī Gaṇeśa has the third eye between the brows. Third eye denotes the power of a person who is spiritually awakened. Lord Śiva burnt the evils of desire, by opening His third eye. What we see with our two eyes are those objects which are physically present before us. But when we develop a higher consciousness we see with our third eye beyond what is physically seen, or the power of intuition which transcends our intellectual power.

Śrī Gaṇeśa wears a splendid crown with jewels shining on it like stars. The crown looks as the very universe itself. This suggests that the liberated man realises the truth that he and the external being who illuminates the whole are one. The crown also signifies that the life which initially finds expression in lowly beings can finally reach the crowned glory of freedom and supreme existence with self effort.

The worshipper of Śrī Gaṇeśa, who is worshipped first in any

Buddhi .. Discrimination intelligence
Siddhi .. Superior consciousness

prayer, will be blessed by both *Buddhi* the discriminative intelligence and *Siddhi* the superior consciousness. Consciousness is not only the power of awareness of self or things but it has also a dynamic and creative energy. The worship of Śrī Gaṇeśa removes the negative trends of mind and makes the worshipper spiritually strong. The form of Śrī Gaṇeśa is a symbolisation of the divine force that removes all impediments from the way of life. The elephant's head of Śrī Gaṇeśa is the most natural symbol that can be used to convey a combination of power expansion and wisdom. Śrī Gaṇeśa is both the way and the goal. Śrī Gaṇeśa bestows on His devotees material prosperity as well as liberation.

It is described in the Yogic *Śāstras* in connection with *Bhaktiyoga* that for the elemental purification it is necessary to meditate in the five *Cakras* namely—*Mūlādhāra, Maṇipūra, Svādhiṣṭhāna, Anāhata* and *Sahasrāra*—shaped like lotus but presiding deities Gaṇapati, Durgā, Sūrya, Śiva and Viṣṇu respectively. This collective worship by the Aryans, is known as *Pañcadevopāsanā.* These five deities are inseparably identical with the five great elements. Therefore Gaṇeśa is the earth. Being inseparable and identical with the earth, 'ग' is supposed to be the seed of Gaṇapati because it is identical with the odour (गन्ध) the specific quality of earth.

—*Compiled*

There is nothing to be achieved by *Devas* and others anywhere in the three worlds without first worshipping you with scents, fragrant flowers and incense.

Those people, those human beings, who worship you are undoubtedly to be worshipped by even Indra and others.

If those who seek benefits do not worship you, you will harass them through impediments, even if it be Brahmā, Viṣṇu Indra and *Devas* or even I myself.

—*Liṅga Purāṇa* (II. 25—27)

Gaṇapati Tattva

—Swami Sri Karapatriji Maharaj

The term Gaṇapati can be defined in various ways. The ultimate principle that prompts and controls the cosmos is *Gaṇapati Tattva.* "गणानां पति: गणपति:।" that is how the term is explained. *Gaṇa* is indicative of group or class—"गणशब्द: समूहस्य वाचक: परिकीर्तित:।." The Absolute Reality that sustains all *Gaṇas* is Gaṇapati. This can be defined also as the Lord of gods etc. Again the Lord of principles like *Mahat-Tattva* is Gaṇapati. Again the ultimate principle which is neither attributeless nor having attributes, in other words which is transcending the qualities of *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa* both, is Gaṇapati. Again the Absolute God due to whom all *Gaṇas* (groups, classes of hosts) have their existence and are prompted, is Gaṇapati. In other words, on the analogy of 'आकाशस्तल्लिङ्गात्' (*Brahma Sūtra* I. 1. 22) whatever principle is capable of creating, sustaining, annihilating, controlling and maintaining, is *Brahma*. The same is Gaṇapati. There is a reference in *Nṛsiṁhapūrvatāpanī Upaniṣad* (III. 3) "इमानि भूतानि आकाशादेव जायन्ते" that is all these creatures are born of ether itself and so *Ākāśa* is indicative of the Absolute, similarly 'ॐ नमस्ते गणपतये त्वमेव केवलं कर्तासि, त्वमेव केवलं धर्तासि, त्वमेव केवलं हर्तासि, त्वमेव सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्मासि।' etc., (*Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣa* I) says that Gaṇapati is synonymous to *Brahma*.

The principle that is subtler than the subtlest and beyond the ken of sense-perception, can be known only through the scriptures. Just as a sound can be perceived and received through ears, even so the ultimate reality in its entirity can be known through the scriptures. This is why *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (III. 9. 26) says—'तं त्वौपनिषदं पुरुषं पृच्छामि' and *Brahma Sūtra* (I. 1.3) says—'शास्त्रयोनित्वात्'.

These scriptural declarations prove that *Brahma*, the ultimate cause of the cosmos can be perceived through scriptures alone. If somehow the possibility of realising the subtler principles through the means other than the scriptures, is proved, in that case the scriptures will remain as simply a superfluous and meaningless thing. Therefore in order to know and realise *Gaṇapati Tattva* only the scriptures are authorities. We know from the scriptures that the Lord of the entire visible universe is Gaṇapati because another etymological explanation of the word *Gaṇa* is 'गण्यन्ते बुद्धयन्ते गणाः'. According to this explanation all the visible objects are covered by the word *Gaṇa* and the base and abode of these *Gaṇas* is Gaṇapati. Anything imaginable is located in and prompted by its ultimate abode, therefore the final abode alone can claim to be the Lord. A doubt can be raised that different gods in different *Purāṇas* are described as ultimate reality whereas the ultimate reality is one without second. How is it possible to accept so many gods as *Brahma*. The reply is that the only one ultimate reality, the *Brahma* in order to fulfil the desires of the different worshippers, appears before them showing the different qualities, forms and names through His unimaginable sportive power. Just as different worshippers worship *Brahma* in different forms and names attributing to Him different qualities like fulfilling the desires, bestowing all sorts of bliss and virtuous inclinations, and with the result they inculcate in themselves the same qualities, exactly the same way the same ultimate *Brahma* manifesting particularly the quality of destroying obstructions, appears in the form of Gaṇapati.

If another objection is raised that in this way all the deities due to different likings and tastes, will be *Brahma* itself and not only this but when the entire universe is *Brahma* Himself, then why only Gaṇapati alone is referred to as *Brahma*, why not everything? In reply it can be said that every deity and everything is, no doubt, in a way *Brahma* as it is manifestation of *Brahma*, yet finally *Brahma Tattva* attributed with particular qualities can be known through scriptures only. In other words, whatever principle with its particular

names, forms and qualities is defined by scriptures as *Brahma* can be known as such, not everything, as it has already been said that only scriptures are competent to explain a subtler and transcendental thing like *Brahma*. What are the scriptures? They are the *Vedas* and *Smṛtis, Itihāsas, Purāṇas* etc., which are based on *Vedas*, are known as scriptures. These scriptures define Gaṇapati as *Pūrṇa Brahma*. In the *Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣa* (1) Gaṇapati is said to be 'त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं तत्त्वमसि'. The meaning is that in the form of Gaṇapati an adjustment of human and elephant both is found. This adjustment apparently shows the oneness among the seemingly different objects. It is an adjustment between 'तत्' and 'त्वम्'. 'तत्' is the causeless cause of the cosmos, omniscient and omnipotent *Paramātmā* whereas 'त्वम्' is little knowing, less powerful and *Jīva*. The oneness of these two is apparently impossible and they are contrary to each other. Yet when 'तत्' (that) gives up its 'thatness' and 'त्वम्' its 'youness' there remains only absolute existence and in that form they are no doubt, one. In the same way in this world of ours although combination of man and elephant is unacceptable yet in God there can be the existence of mutually opposing qualities. Just as according to *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 'सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म' (II. 1. 1) the Absolute *Brahma* is devoid of all attributes and that is denoted by 'तत्' similarly 'त्वम्' is the indicator of the *Brahma* in the form of manifested world. Both of them are adjusted as one unit in 'असि' that is always immutable. In the same way the oneness between man and elephant lies in the form of Gaṇapati. 'त्वम्' is represented by human form and 'तत्' by elephant head which is 'असि' that is Gaṇapati and there both become one.

According to scriptures 'नर' (human) is the representative of 'प्रणवब्रह्म' accompanied by the attributes—"नराज्जातानि तत्त्वानि नाराणीति विदुर्बुधाः". The 'गज' has been defined in the scriptures—"समाधिना योगिनो यत्र गच्छन्ति इति 'गः' यस्माद् बिम्बप्रतिबिम्बतया प्रणवात्मकं जगज्जायते इति जः" (the ultimate reality which is attained by *Yogīs* through trance is 'ग' and just as an image causes a reflection of its own, similarly the *Praṇava* in the form of this extensive universe is manifested by *Brahma*—as cause and effect.

That extensive manifestation of *Brahma* is 'ज').'जन्माद्यस्य यत:' (*Brahma Sūtra* I. 1. 2), 'यस्मादोंकारसम्भूतिर्यतो वेदो यतो जगत्' etc., scriptural sayings also support that.'त्वम्' with attributes, that is 'नर' is the body of Gaṇeśa from the toes to the neck. It being accompanied by attributes, is inferior to the ultimate reality that is undifferentiated and that is why it is the lower part. Undifferentiated and the best portion of Gaṇeśa from neck to the head is 'तत्' and it is in the form of elephant because being attributeless and undifferentiated, it is the superiormost. The whole of His body from the toes to the tuft is 'असि' that is unbrokenly immutable and harmonious pleasure.

This Gaṇeśa is one-tusked (एकदन्त). 'एक' stands for *Māyā* (delusion) and 'दन्त' for the holder of *Māyā*. *Mudgala Purāṇa* says—

एकशब्दात्मिका माया तस्याः सर्वं समुद्भवम्।
दन्तः सत्ताधरस्तत्र मायाचालक उच्यते।।

Since there is a combination of *Māyā* and her prompter in Lord Gaṇeśa, so He is called 'एकदन्त'. Another epithet of Geṇeśa is 'वक्रतुण्ड'—'वक्रम् आत्मरूपं मुखं यस्य'.'वक्र' means twisted. 'आत्मस्वरूप' (the real nature of self) is twisted or curled because this is beyond the approach of speech and mind whereas the perceptible world is within the campus of these—"यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह" (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* II. 4). Elsewhere also it is said—

कण्ठाधो माययायुक्तं मस्तकं ब्रह्मवाचकम्।
वक्राख्यं येन विघ्नेशस्तेनायं वक्रतुण्डकः।।

Gaṇeśa is also four armed, since He establishes gods, human beings, demons and *Nāgas* (the serpents) at the same time He is the weilder of 'चतुर्वर्ग' (*Dharma, Artha, Kāma* and *Mokṣa*) and the four *Vedas*. In order to gratify His devotees He holds in His four hands noose, goad, boon-giving gesture and the gesture removing the fear. His noose is to entrap the infatuation, the deadliest enemy of the mankind and his goad is to control the innumerable universes. His tooth is a symbol of destroying the wicked and His 'वरदमुद्रा' indicates His capability of bestowing all desires. It is said—

स्वर्गेषु देवताश्चायं पृथ्व्यां नारांस्तथाऽतले।
असुरान्नागमुख्यांश्च स्थापयिष्यति बालकः।।

तत्त्वानि चालयन् विप्रास्तस्मान्नाम्ना चतुर्भुजः।
चतुर्णां विविधानां च स्थापकोऽयं प्रकीर्तितः।।

His vehicle is mouse, a knower of everybody's heart , residing in the recess of all creatures' hearts and the enjoyer of the fruits of everybody's actions. It is a thief also because it steals all their belongings unknown even to the beings themselves. Nobody knows it because the all pervading one obscured by His *Māyā* enjoys everything. That is why He is known as 'भोक्तारं सर्वतपसां' (enjoyer of all penances). Etymologically the word 'मूषक' has been derived from the verb-root 'मूष्' (to steal). Just as the mouse steals the commodities enjoyable by human beings and still remains untainted with sin or virtue, even so the all-pervading *Brahma* obscured by His *Māyā* even enjoying all pains and pleasures, remains untainted. He appears in the form of a mouse to render services to the all-pervading Gaṇeśa. It has become His vehicle—

मूषकं वाहनं चास्य पश्यन्ति वाहनं परम्।
तेन मूषकवाहोऽयं वेदेषु कथितोऽभवत्।।
मुष् स्तेये तथा धातुर्ज्ञातव्यः स्तेयब्रह्मधृक्।
नामरूपात्मकं सर्वं तत्रासद् ब्रह्म वर्तते।।
भोगेषु भोगभोक्ता च ब्रह्माकारेण वर्तते।
अहंकारयुतास्तं वै न जानन्ति विमोहिता।।
ईश्वरः सर्वभोक्ता च चोरवत्तत्र संस्थितः।
स एव मूषकः प्रोक्तो मनुजानां प्रचालकः।।

He is 'लम्बोदर' since the entire universe is accomodated in His belly and He is in nobody's belly. It is said—

तस्योदरात् समुत्पन्नं नाना विश्वं न संशयः।

He is 'शूर्पकर्ण' because with His ear-lobes like winnowing plate He removes all the dust of virtues and sins and gets the *Yogīs* obtain *Brahma* and He is eulogized by the high rank *Yogīs* and heard by the curious aspirants—

रजोयुक्तं यथा धान्यं रजोहीनं करोति च।
शूर्पं सर्वनराणां वै योग्यं भोजनकाम्यया।।
तथा मायाविकारेण युतं ब्रह्म न लभ्यते।
त्यक्तोपासनकं तस्य शूर्पकर्णस्य सुन्दरि।।

शूर्पकर्णं समाश्रित्य त्यक्त्वा मलविकारकम्।
ब्रह्मैव नरजातिस्थो भवेत्तेन तथा स्मृतः।।

In the same way the Lord Gaṇeśa is 'ज्येष्ठराज'—a seniormost among the seniors. Gods like *Brahmā* etc., are known to be the senior among the celestial hierarchy. Gaṇeśa is one of the superiormost among them. Being propitiated and pleased with the penances practised by Pārvatī, incarnates Himself as the son of the eternal couple Śiva and Pārvatī.

Just as Śrī Rāmacandra and Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra eventhough sons of Daśaratha and Vasudeva respectively, were in no way inferior to them, even so being born of Śiva and Pārvatī Lord Gaṇeśa was not inferior to them. This is why at the time of marriage of Lord Śiva He was not only present but was worshipped also and it is not at all surprising. It is said in *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa* that Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, the ultimate *Brahma*, abiding in *Goloka*, appeared in the form of Gaṇapati. Therefore Gaṇeśa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śiva etc., are one and the same reality. The following *Mantra* of *Ṛgveda* is a pointer to the same *Gaṇapati Tattva*—

गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे कविं कवीनामुपमश्रवस्तमम्।
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत आ नः शृण्वन्नूतिभिः सीद सादनम्।।

(II. 23. 1)

Another *Mantra* quite in resemblance with this we find in *Yajurveda*—"गणानां त्वा गणपतिँ हवामहे" (23. 19).

The aforesaid *Mantra* of *Rgveda* is intended to eulogize *Gaṇeśa* only. Although the *Mantra* from *Yajurveda* as its 'विनियोग' indicates, seems to invoke 'अश्व' (horse) yet due to the unavailability in the horse, of those qualities described in the *Mantra*, it appears that it is the Gaṇapati who is invoked and offered prayer suggestively. The commentary over this *Mantra* by Sāyaṇa runs—

'हे वसो! वसति सर्वेषु भूतेषु व्यापकत्वादिति, तत्सम्बुद्धौ। गणानां महदादीनां ब्रह्मादीनाम् अन्येषां वा समूहानाम्। गणरूपेण साक्षिरूपेण ज्ञेयाधिष्ठानरूपेण वा। 'गण' संख्याने इत्यस्माद् गण्यते बुद्ध्यते, योगिभिः साक्षात्क्रियते यः स गणस्तद् रूपेण वा पालकम्, एतादृशं त्वां आवाहयामहे। तथा प्रियाणां वल्लभानां प्रियपतिम्, प्रियस्य पालकम्। तच्छेषतयैव सर्वस्य प्रेमास्पदत्वात्। 'आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं

भवतीति श्रुतेः।' निधीनां सुखनिधीनां सुखनिधेः पालकं त्वां हवामहे आवाहयामहे। मदन्तःकरणे प्रादुर्भूय स्वस्वरूपानन्दसमर्पणेन ममापि पतिर्भूयाः। पुनः हे देव! अहं ते गर्भधम् अजायां प्रकृतौ चैतन्यप्रतिबिम्बात्मकं गर्भं दधातीति गर्भधं बिम्बात्मकं चैतन्यम्, (तथा च—मम योनिर्महद्ब्रह्म तस्मिन् गर्भं दधाम्यहमिति भगवत्-स्मरणात्) आ-आकृष्य योगबलेन, अजानि स्वहृदि स्थाप्यानि, त्वं च मम हृदि अजासि-क्षिपसि स्वस्वरूपं स्थापयसि।'

"O all pervading God, who protects and maintains the gods etc., by virtue of being their base and witness, protects the lovers by being an affectionate darling and the worldly worshippers by the ultimate love. He suppliments worldly pleasures by unearthly ultimate bliss. In other words one who does the job of creation, maintenance, dissolution of the world and protection of the devotees by a fraction of His, I invoke You as the Absolute Lord. I pray that You do protect me by bestowing the bliss that is Your very form and nature. Finally bestow on me the power that I may have in my heart Your that form which places the seed of consciousness in the womb of *Prakṛti*, for the creation of the universe, and which is personified consciousness. Bestow Your grace on me to make me able to meditate upon You with pure heart and mind.

This way *Gaṇapati Tattva*, the object of the *Mantra*, is capable of destroying all obstacles. So in the tenth *Mantra* of *Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣa* "विघ्ननाशिने शिवसुताय वरदमूर्तये नमः:" has been said. Sāyaṇa while commenting on this writes—"समयकालात्मकभयहारिणे अमृतात्मकप्रदत्वात्" e. g., Gaṇeśa is capable of removing fears on account of time and death and He is a perfect immortaliser.

In *Skanda* and *Mudgala Purāṇas* we find a story with reference to the glory of Vināyaka which runs as—

Once the king Abhinandana started a sacrifice which boycotted Indra from his share. Indra was infuriated to learn this. He summoned *Kāla* and ordered him to disturb the sacrifice. The personified *Kāla* appeared in the form of Vighnāsura to destroy the *Yajña*. The mortal world is very much subordinated to *Kāla*. It is *Kāla* which makes the three worlds move always through this and that. Only those persons holding complete knowledge of *Brahma*

subdue that *Kāla* and become immortal. The means of attaining *Brahmajñāna* is virtuous conduct prescribed by *Vedas* and *Smṛtis*—"स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः"(*Gītā* XVIII. 46). It is through virtuous deeds that an aspirant with pure heart realises God, the Absolute. It is He who defeats *Kāla* and *Kāla* in order to escape the defeat, appears in the form of obstacles. Those devoid of virtues, are always subordinated to *Kāla*.That is why *Kāla* in the form of Vighnāsura killed the king Abhinandana and started annihilating virtues visibly or invisibly here, there and everywhere. Puzzled by this the sages like Vasiṣṭha approached Brahmā, the creator, and instructed by him worshipped and offered prayer to Lord Gaṇeśa since no other godly deity except Gaṇapati had power to kill *Kāla*. Gaṇeśa is furnished with uncommon qualities of obstacle remover. This fact is supported by *Vedas* and *Smṛtis*. It is known through the standard social conduct, the sayings of sages and references from Vedic literature. Eventually Vighnāsura also was defeated by Lord Gaṇeśa and went in His refuge and became His obedient servant. Since then Gaṇeśa became famous as Vighnarāja (the lord of obstacles). Since that time every virtuous act which is started without remembering Vighnarāja Gaṇeśa, is faced with obstacles. Since then obstacles depended on Lord Gaṇeśa. The obstacles being another form of *Kāla*, are in a way, manifestations of the Lord. "विशेषेण जगत्सामर्थ्यं हन्तीति विघ्नः"— "The agency which deprives Brahmā etc., also of their creative power is called *Vighna*". In other words every activity of Brahmā etc., can be defeated by obstacles, so they cannot work according to their own sweet will. But when they obtain the grace of Lord Gaṇeśa they become quite capable, being free from obstacles. *Vighna* and *Vināyaka* both being God Himself, are worth praising. Therefore during 'पुण्याहवाचन' performance, there is a tradition to say —"भगवन्तौ विघ्नविनायकौ प्रीयेताम्". Obstacles are under control of only Gaṇeśa and nobody else, as there is a mention in *Yogavāsiṣṭha* that while Bhṛgu was prepared to pronounce curse, the *Kāla* in the form of *Vighna*, said—

मा तपः क्षपयाबुद्धे कल्पकालमहानलैः।
यो न दग्धोऽस्मि मे तस्य किं त्वं शापेन धक्ष्यसि॥

संसारावलयो ग्रस्ता निगीर्णा रुद्रकोटयः।

(*Sthiti Pra*. X. 26-27)

The appearance of obstacles in the projects wherein Gaṇeśa is not remembered, is unavoidable. Therefore remembrance of Gaṇeśa in the beginning of any undertaking is necessary.

If it is advocated that 'ओंकार' is the most auspicious and it is indispensably remembered in all Vedic performances and worships, thus is sufficient to remove all obstacles, remembering Gaṇeśa is meaningless; this argument is not correct and proper because after all 'ओङ्कार' also is accompanied by attributes. It is found in *Mudgala Purāṇa*—" गणेशस्यादिपूजनं चतुर्विधं चतुर्मूर्तिधारकत्वात् " The *Purāṇas* consisting of eight hundred thousand verses came out of the four mouths of Brahmā. After that in the end of *Dwāpara*, Vyāsa wrote eighteen *Purāṇas* and sub-*Purāṇas* in order to impart knowledge to dull witted people of *Kaliyuga*. The first one of them is *Brāhma Purāṇa*. There the *Gaṇeśa Tattva*, attributeless and beyond the ken of the intellect, has been defined as it is the maker of 'प्रणव' which in its turn expanded in the form of the cosmos. In the same way *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* is the first one among the sub-*Purāṇas* which describes the oneness of Lord Gaṇeśa with attribute and attributeless both. At the same time it describes Gaṇeśa appearing in the various forms like Gajānana etc. It is not correct to say as it is often said—that *Upa-Purāṇas* are of inferior grade. We find that Viṣṇu is often referred to as Upendra but He is in no way inferior to Indra. In the same way *Upa-Purāṇas* are not inferior to *Purāṇas*. *Mudgala Purāṇa* is the last one among the *Upa-Purāṇas*. In this *Purāṇa*, Gaṇeśa is described as the proponent of *Yoga*. We find that in the beginning, middle and the end of *Vedas*, *Purāṇas* and *Upa-Purāṇas, Gaṇeśa Tattva* has been propounded. Not only this, Brahmā, Viṣṇu etc., also are discussed and dealt with by the *Śāstras* only because of being fragments of Gaṇeśa. Some people remember Gaṇeśa in the form of pure consciousness stationed in their intellect before starting any virtuous act, some remember 'प्रणव' while still others remember Gajānana, Gaṇeśa etc., still others remember Gaṇeśa, the embodiment of *Yoga*. This way in

the beginning of every undertaking Gaṇeśa is found to have been remembered in this form or that.

Some say that at the time of final departure and sacrifices for manes remembering Gaṇeśa is not popular. This is also incorrect because it is the *Gaṇeśa Tattva* which stationed in *Gaṇa*, provides liberation for manes. In the *Pitṛ Yajñas* prescribed by *Vedas* the worship of Gaṇeśa is not prohibited. So there also Gaṇeśa is worshipped and this worship is proper also. This is why *Śruti* refers to Gaṇeśa as *Jyeṣṭharāja*.

In *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* (I. 45. 10-11) at the time of killing Tripura, Śiva says—

शैवैस्त्वदीयैरथ वैष्णवैश्च शाक्तैश्च सौरैरथ सर्वकार्ये।
शुभाशुभे लौकिकवैदिके च त्वमर्चनीयः प्रथमं प्रयत्नात्।।

In *Gaṇeśa Gītā* (VI.16) remembering Gaṇeśa has been prescribed at the time of death also—

यः स्मृत्वा त्यजति प्राणमन्ते मां श्रद्धयान्वितः।
स यात्यपुनरावृत्तिं प्रसादान्मम भूभुज।।

In *Gaṇeśottara Tāpanī Upaniṣad* (3) also it is said—

"ॐ गणेशो वै ब्रह्म तद् विद्यात्। यदिदं किं च सर्वं भूतं भव्यं जायमानं च तत् सर्वमित्याचक्षते।"

This way it is proved that 'पूर्णब्रह्म' alone is Gaṇeśa holding the images of Gajānana etc., who is attributed with being 'निर्गुण' and at the same time having the qualities like removing obstacles etc.

Is Gaṇeśa non-Aryan deity—

Now-a-days some book-worms, so-called scholars, the disciples of the Western *Paṇḍitas* whose mind is vitiated due to the wrong impressions, express their absurd opinion on Geṇeśa. Of course they are not supposed to go against their Western teachers. They say that in the beginning Gaṇeśa was not an Aryan deity but when the Aryans defeated the local non-Aryans, they, in order to console them, included Gaṇeśa in the Aryan pantheon. The scholars of this type collect certain quotations from *Purāṇas* and *Vedas,* classical literature and other books and present a distorted picture in such a way that the real form of Gaṇapati is obscured.

Although really intelligent persons ignore such utterances yet some of the comparatively less intelligent people are naturally misguided. Therefore it will not be out of place to analyse this point also. The foremost question is how these persons learnt that there is something like *Gaṇeśa Tattva.* Did they learn through the study of scriptures like *Purāṇa* or did they come to the conclusion by observing the images? If they learnt it through the study of the *Śāstras* their thesis is wrong as Gaṇeśa is declared to be the most venerable even by the gods like Brahmā. He cannot be said to be a non-Aryan deity. If their conclusion is based on the statues and images which they see in a temple or museum, in that case also their opinion is not to be relied upon because those images also have been made according to the scriptural norms and standard meant for meditation by the devotees. If the above mentioned points are not acceptable, in that case Gaṇeśa can never be taken as a deity worth worshipping. No sensible man on earth can accept every wooden or earthen article, statue or anything else, to be an object of worship. If it is argued that by invoking a particular invisible power in a particular statue or image, it can be worshipped, in such a case how can it be decided what godly power has been invoked in that image? If ultimately scriptures have been taken resort to, then *Śāstras* have declared Gaṇeśa to be eternal God. Then how can He become a non-Aryan deity?

It is a very strange thing to say that Gaṇeśa is a non-Aryan deity; the Aryans came here from a far off country. India was formerly a land of non-Aryans and the Aryans have accomodated the non-Aryan deity Gaṇeśa in order to pacify and gratify the original inhabitants of this land; this all is nonsense and without any head or tail. No sensible person having faith in *Vedas* and *Purāṇas* can think of Gaṇeśa to be a non-Aryan God. As a matter of fact it is a result of biased prejudice and vitiated impressions created by Western education and pattern of research. This is why these persons with their little knowledge are worse than the totally ignorant ones. It is quite deservedly said—

अज्ञः सुखमाराध्यः सुखतरमाराध्यते विशेषज्ञः।
ज्ञानलवदुर्विदग्धं ब्रह्मापि तं नरं न रञ्जयति।।

According to the rule of scriptural studies one should approach a deserving teacher and learn and appreciate the hidden secrets of *Śāstras* and the seemingly contradictory statements of the *Śāstras* should be clarified by expressing curiosity to know the truth and by raising pertinent objections, discussing and establishing adjustment among those statements. Not following these rules and norms of study the different sports of Gaṇapati appear to the people as illusive, for example His eternality, His being son of Pārvatī being beheaded by the look of saturn and again transplantation of elephant head on His body.

These illusory riddles are experienced not only in case of Gaṇeśa but equally in case of Śrī Rāma etc.—as their being unborn and again taking birth; His ever-liberatedness and again wailing in the separation of Sītā. It is therefore that Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa said in his *Rāmacaritamānasa*—

राम देखि सुनि चरित तुम्हारे। जड़ मोहहिं बुध होहिं सुखारे॥

(II. 126. 4)

In fact those who could not appreciate the importance of His *Māyā* which is capable of converting impossible into possible, are totally incapable of knowing the secrets of His sports who is altogether unthinkable. 'अजायमानो बहुधा विजायते' (*Yajurveda* 31. 16), 'मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि' (*Gītā* IX.4), 'न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि' (*Gītā* IX. 5) etc., cannot make their intention clear to such persons. The sports of God in His 'सगुण' form are more incomprehensible in the eyes of sincere devotees even in comparison to attributeless *Brahma*—

निर्गुण रूप सुलभ अति सगुन न जानहिं कोइ।
सुगम अगम नाना चरित सुनि मुनि मन भ्रम होइ।।

(*Mānasa* VII. 73 B)

This is why Tulasīdāsa advised not to have any doubt about how many and what forms Gaṇeśa had or whether He was worshipped by Lord Śiva or not—

कोउ सुनि संसय करै जनि सुर अनादि जियँ जानि॥

(*Mānasa* I. 100)

When the logic of greatest logicians fail and it cannot solve the puzzles of physical world itself, how can they be expected to produce any argument or logic about God who is beyond all logic. Therefore one comes to the conclusion that indeed in subtle matters one should rely on the scriptures with complete faith and belief. By earning the necessary knowledge from the *Śāstras*, we should necessarily worship Lord Gaṇeśa in the beginning of any undertaking. Specially where other worldly things are involved, only the scriptures are authority and there is no other way. That is why the Lord said in *Gītā*—

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ।
ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि।।

(16. 16)

—*Kalyana*

"*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*—these are the modes of *Buddhi (Prakṛti)* and not of the Self. By (developing) the quality of *Sattva* (therefore) one should control (the operation of) the other two (viz., *Rajas* and *Tamas*) and (then) *Sattva* itself (in the shape of *Sāttvika* virtues like truthfulness and compassion) by *Sattva* (in the form of quietism). As a result of *Sattva* grown predominant, appears in man the virtue bearing the label of devotion to Me. *Sattva* develops through the use of *Sāttvika* things and thence proceeds righteousness (in the form of devotion). Righteousness (in the form of devotion), which contributes to the predominance of *Sattva* and which is (therefore) the superlative virtue, curbs (the element of) *Rajas* and *Tamas;* and, when both these are subdued, unrighteousness, which has its root in these latter, soon disappears as a matter of course."

—*Bhāgavata* (XI. 13. 1—3)

Those who do not feel pleasure or pain while they are encountered with favourable and unfavourable things, entirely depend on *Brahma*, are wise knowers of *Brahma* and equal minded also.

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (IV. 19)

Temples of Lord Gaṇeśa in South India

—*R. Kannan*

India, in particular South India, is very famous for the temple-architecture. Temple or *Devālaya* is a place of worship for Hindus, where idol is kept for concentration of human mind. Even though God is all-pervading and omnipresent, it is very difficult to imagine an abstruct figure and worship. Hence our elders in their wisdom built big temples and installed idols of God in them. In order to infuse divine power in those idols, they consecrated them with *Mantras* from *Vedas,* hymns and prayers. In order to keep the sanctity of those worshipping places, they also proclaimed rules and regulations in the construction of them as per *Vedas* and *Āgamas.* These temples, became seats of God on Earth, and places of collective worship for human beings to get peace and prosperity.

In our Vedic culture, though innumerable Gods have been mentioned only six of them got prominence as chosen by their followers: They are—Viṣṇu, Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Kumāra (Kārtikeya), Śakti (goddess) and Sūrya (sungod). Bhagavatpāda Ādi Śaṅkarācārya divided the sects with the followers of above Gods as *Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Gāṇapatya, Kaumāra, Śākta* and *Saura,* respectively. The followers of the above sects built temples for their Gods either individually or collectively. While worshipping their God, they had the tolerance or even respect, towards the other Gods. There was and still continues to be, amity among the different cults.

Among the temples or places of worship built for different Gods, the temples devoted to Lord Gaṇeśa seem to outnumber those of others, in South India and Western India. Lord Gaṇeśa-temples are seen in every nook and corner of the cities, towns and

villages. Small temples of Lord Gaṇeśa are seen even on the platforms of the streets of big towns to enable busy people to offer worship while on their way to work or return. People start their daily routines with a prayer to Lord Gaṇeśa, so that the same could go ahead successfully without any obstructions whatsoever, as He is called Lord Vighneśvara, Lord Gaṇeśa, the elder son of Lord Śiva and Goddess Pārvatī is, *Āśutoṣa* (easily propitiated) and He grants all the boons to His devotees with a pure heart.

Though a number of temples are there for Lord Gaṇeśa in the Southern part of India, we shall have a glimpse of some of them.

(1) Rock-fort (Tiruchy)—

Here the Lord is popularly known as Ucchi Pilliar (incidentally Lord Gaṇeśa is known as *Pilliar* in Tamil Nadu) is seated at the top of huge-rock. Even the temple of Lord Śiva has been built a little below in the rock. Normally Lord *Murugā* (Kārtikeya) has his temple on the top of rocks and mountains, whereas here his brother Lord Gaṇeśa has His temple on the top of the rock, a rare feature.

(2) Vātāpī Gaṇapati—

This temple for Lord Gaṇeśa is in Tiruchettangudi near Tiruvarur. It has a historical reference. The commander in chief Paranjoti of king Narasiṁha Pallava brought this Gaṇeśa idol from Vātāpī after defeating the king Pulakeśin the second.

(3) Tiruvalam (North Arcot—Ambedkar district)—

Here the Lord Gaṇeśa is popularly known as Valam Vanda Vināyakar (Gaṇeśa who went round). The temple is situated on the banks of Ponnai river. As per scriptures, Lord Vināyaka (Gaṇeśa) went round Lord Śiva and goddess Pārvatī (as they both represented the whole universe) and claimed the divine fruit from them, having come first (in the competition of going round the universe) before his brother Kārtikeya who performed the feat by actually travelling round the universe. This feature is enshrined in this temple devoted to Lord Gaṇeśa.

(4) Tiruvalamchuli (Tanjore district)—

Here the Lord Gaṇeśa is called Vellai Pilliar (white Gaṇeśa).

The Lord in this temple bestows His benediction to the devotees with a large and kind heart (pure like a white milk). Near this temple, is the temple of Swāmimalai, the famous seat of Lord Kārtikeya who was said to have taught His own father Lord Śiva, the meaning of *Om* and got the name Swāmīnāthan.

(5) Senpakkam (North Arcot—Ambedkar Distt.)—

There is a temple in Senpakkam for Lord Gaṇeśa. Here we find eleven idols of *Swayambhū Gaṇapati.* The arrangement of these idols remind us the figure of *Om.* This temple had been patronised by Marāṭhā kings and the images here have also been worshipped by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya of Kāma-Koṭi Pīṭham.

(6) Tirupattur (North Arcot—Ambedkar Distt.)—

The Lord Gaṇeśa here is known as Maya-Pilliar (wonderful Gaṇeśa). This temple came into existence with an idol used by children for playing. This has become very popular now.

(7) Pondicherry—

The Lord Gaṇeśa here is called as Manakkula Pilliar. During the French rule, the idol was once thrown into the sea nearby. However, the very next day, Lord Gaṇeśa came to His original place, by means of His own divine power. Struck with wonder, the French Government arranged to build a temple for Lord Gaṇeśa in that place itself. Today, the temple is existing with all splendour.

(8) Viruddāchalam (Villuppuram—Ramasamy Padayachiar District)—

The Lord here is known as Mattru Uraitha Pilliar (the Lord who verified the purity). Here the Lord Gaṇeśa seemed to have borne witness for the purity of gold coins possessed by Sundarar, the first and the foremost of sixty three Nāyanmārs who spread the Shaivism.

(9) Tirunārāyura (Cuddalore—Vallalar District)—

There is a temple of Lord Gaṇeśa in Tirunārāyura about 16 kms. away from Chidambaram. The Lord here is known as Polla Pilliar. Here, as per legends, the Lord, came out of the idol, in person to accept the offerings of a devotee, Nambiandar Nambi (as the devotee was preparing to lay down his life, if Lord Gaṇeśa

was adamant in not accepting the offerings in person).

(10) Cheyyar (North Arcot—Ambedkar Distt.)—

Here the Lord Gaṇeśa, known as Nartana Vinayakar, is in the dancing pose. As per the legends, the Lord, as desired by His devotees, came in the form of a Vedic scholar and explained the principles contained in *Veda* by means of His dancing.

(11) Madurai—

In the Mīnākṣī temple, there is a big idol for Lord Gaṇeśa. He is known as Mukkuruni Pilliar. Everyday He is worshipped with special offerings of *Kozhukkattai* (an eatable made out of rice). On the *Gaṇeśa Caturthī* day, a big *Kozhukkattai* made out of seven measures of rice is being offered to the Lord. Apart from this idol, there are *Ṣoḍaśa Gāṇapatya* (sixteen) idols installed in this temple including Santāna Gaṇapati (who bestows children to childless parents) and Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇapati who bestows the detachment from the worldly things, to all those who worship Him.

(12) Pilliar Patti (Near Kunrakkudi in Ramanathapuram District)—

This temple of Lord Gaṇeśa is gaining more and more importance day by day. Here, the Lord is installed in a cave and is known as Karpaga Vināyakār, who grants all wishes like the divine tree *Kalpataru*. The devotees here, worship the Lord, with wet clothes, taking only *Kozhukkattai* offered to the Lord as their food, during their *Vrata* (days of penance). Apart from the above temples, there are thousands, and thousands of temples for Lord Gaṇeśa in every nook and corner of our Land. Above all, the Lord is seated in the minds of Lakhs and Lakhs of people who worship Him with a single heart, bestowing all benediction to them.

विघ्नराज कृपासिन्धो कोटिसूर्यसमप्रभ।
अविघ्नं कुरु मे देव सर्वकार्येषु सर्वदा॥

"Let the Lord Gaṇeśa, who is the controller of obstacles, who is the ocean of kindness, and who blazes like crores of suns, remove all obstacles, from all our undertakings at all times".

Procedure of Observing Caturthī Vrata

There occur two *Caturthīs* in a month—*Saṅkaṣṭī* in dark fortnight and *Varadā* or *Vināyaka Caturthī* in bright fortnight. The observance of both of them is equally beneficial to the devotees with slight variance in their results. In the month of *Caitra* Gaṇeśa should be worshipped on these dates in the aspect of Vāsudeva, brahmans should be feasted and *Dakṣiṇā* of gold should be given to them. Doing this way the devotee goes to the abode of Śrī Viṣṇu and even the gods pay their respect and tribute to him.

In *Vaiśākha* Gaṇeśa should be worshipped in His aspect of *Saṅkarṣaṇa.* After feasting, a charity of conch should be given to brahmans. With the effect of this, the devotee goes to *Saṅkarṣaṇa Loka* and enjoys comforts for a very long period.

In the month of *Jyeṣṭha* on both the *Caturthīs* Gaṇeśa should be worshipped as Pradyumna. Brahmans should be given fruits and beetroots. By this the devotee goes to the heaven. Another vow (*Satī Vrata*) is performed by the ladies only, in this very month on the *Caturthīs.* By observing this, following the scriptural methods strictly, the ladies go to the abode of goddess Pārvatī—the mother of Gaṇeśa, and enjoy there like a goddess themselves.

Āṣāḍha is another important month. On the *Caturthīs* of this month, Gaṇeśa should be worshipped in the aspect of Aniruddha with all the devotion and love. After the *Pūjā Saṁnyāsīs* (recluses) should be given *Kamaṇḍalu.* One who observes this vow, gets his desires fulfilled. Being the first day of *Rathantara Kalpa,* one of the most important vows of Gaṇeśa should be performed that day. By worshipping the most auspicious Gaṇeśa in the prescribed way,

the devotee gets what is difficult even for gods.

On the dark *Caturthī* of *Śrāvaṇa,* particularly at the time of rising moon, the auspicious Gaṇeśa should be offered an ablution of water. After that He should be invoked and worshipped by all the *Pūjā* materials with devotion and *Modaka* should be given as *Naivedya* to Him. After the completion of vow the devotee himself should eat those sweet balls as *Prasāda* and then again after worshipping Gaṇeśa, he should sleep on the ground itself. Those who observe this vow, get all their desires fulfilled and after death they attain to Gaṇeśahood. In all the three worlds there is no other vow like this.

On the bright *Caturthī* of *Śrāvaṇa* a vow of *Dūrvā Gaṇapati* has been prescribed. That day in the morning the devotee should finish his daily purificatory rites and then he should establish the golden image of one-tusked Gaṇeśa with four arms on a throne. It is necessary to get the golden *Dūrvā* made. After that in the centre of *Sarvatobhadra Vedī,* a jar full of water *(Kalaśa)* should be placed. After placing that golden *Dūrvā* on the mouth of the *Kalaśa* the image of Gaṇeśa should be placed thereon. Lord should be clad with a red-silken garment and worshipped with fragrant flowers and leaves and the other *Pūjā* materials. *Āratī,* eulogizing, salutation and circumambulation should follow and due apology should be offered. If one continues this way for three to five years, all his desires are fulfilled.

On the dark *Caturthī* of *Bhādrapada,* Lord Gaṇeśa, accompanied by *Bahulā,* should be worshipped with sandal paste, flowers, garland and *Dūrvā* with due devotion and faith. After that, circumambulation should be made. Charity and alms should be given according to one's capacity. If the devotee is not in such a position, he should offer his salutation to the *Bahulā* cow and immerse it. This way one should continue performing this *Pūjā* for sixteen, ten or atleast five years and then one should give up this vow ceremoniously in the prescribed way. At that time he should give a healthy milking cow to a deserving brahman. Those who perform this vow— ladies or gents, get all sorts of comforts and enjoyments, command respect even from gods and

in the end reach *Goloka.*

On bright *Caturthī* of *Bhādrapada* the vow of Siddhivināyaka should be observed. On this day the Lord Gaṇeśa incarnated Himself in the noon, hence this vow may be performed only when *Caturthī* is available in the midday. First of all with a concentrated mind a devotee should meditate upon the Lord Siddhivināyaka, the giver of all blessings, after that with due faith and devotion, twenty-one leaves should be offered every time pronouncing one name of Lord Gaṇeśa.

His twenty-one names with the manner of offering leaves are given as under—

1. सुमुखाय नमः	*Śamī* leaves
2. गणाधीशाय नमः	*Bhṛṅgarāja* leaves
3. उमापुत्राय नमः	*Bilva* leaves
4. गजमुखाय नमः	*Dūrvā* leaves
5. लम्बोदराय नमः	Jujube leaves
6. हरसूनवे नमः	*Dhatūrā* leaves
7. शूर्पकर्णाय नमः	*Tulasī* leaves*
8. वक्रतुण्डाय नमः	*Sema* leaves
9. गुहाग्रजाय नमः	*Apāmārga* leaves
10. एकदन्ताय नमः	*Kaṇṭakāri* leaves
11. हेरम्बाय नमः	*Sindūra* leaves
12. चतुर्होत्रे नमः	*Taja* leaves
13. सर्वेश्वराय नमः	*Agastya* leaves
14. विकटाय नमः	*Karavīra* leaves
15. हेमतुण्डाय नमः	Banana leaves
16. विनायकाय नमः	*Arka* leaves
17. कपिलाय नमः	*Arjuna* leaves
18. वटवे नमः	*Devadāru* leaves
19. भालचन्द्राय नमः	*Maruā* leaves
20. सुराग्रजाय नमः	*Gāndhārī* leaves
21. सिद्धिविनायकाय नमः	*Ketakī* leaves

* Generally in *Gaṇeśa Pūjā Tulasī* leaves are prohibited but in this particular form of *Śūrpakarṇa, Tulasī* leaves are prescribed.

Thus these are twenty-one varieties of trees and plants whose leaves should be used in worshipping some particular aspects of Gaṇeśa with pronouncing related name and *Mantra*.

By this way Lord Gaṇeśa is very much pleased. In the end two *Dūrvā* leaves, sandal paste, flowers and unbroken rice should be offered to the deity. Five *Modakas* in the form of *Naivedya* one should offer to the Lord Gaṇeśa with love and devotion. Finally offering water for washing His mouth, one should prostrate himself at His feet with faith and devotion. Then comes a final prayer and bidding farewell. Along with all the paraphernalia the golden image of Lord Gaṇeśa should be given to the *Ācārya* and proper *Dakṣiṇā* to the other brahmans. This worship should continue for five years atleast. Doing this way the devotee gets all luxuries and comforts in this world and the other world also. One should not have a vision of moon on this *Tithi*.

On the bright *Caturthī* of *Āśvina* month *Kaparadīśa Vināyaka* should be worshipped with the sixteen *Pūjā* materials reciting the sixteen *Mantras* of *Puruṣa Sūkta* one at a time. It is supposed to be very beneficial to the devotee.

The dark *Caturthī* of *Kārtika* is known as *Karaka Caturthī*. It is particularly observed by the ladies. On this day early in the morning one should take bath and purify herself with purificatory rites decorating herself with new clothes and ornaments, should worship Lord Gaṇeśa with devotion. With a pure heart and full devotion she should offer ten pots full of sweet edibles before the Lord Gajānana. While offering these eatables she should mentally pray—"O ocean of compassion, *Kapardī Gaṇeśa*, be pleased." After that those pots of edibles must be distributed among the ladies (with their husbands alive) and brahmans. One should continue muttering the names of Lord Gaṇeśa and meditating upon His form and name. In the night when the moon rises, ablution of water should be offered to Him. The lady performing the vow, should take only sweets as her food for the completion of the vow. One should continue this vow for twelve to sixteen years. If

possible, the lady should continue this vow throughout her life. It is capable of giving unbroken comforts and long life of her husband.

The bright *Caturthī* of *Mārgaśīrṣa* is known as *Kṛcchra Caturthī*. According to *Skanda Purāṇa* starting from this day, on every *Caturthī* one should observe fast and worship Gaṇeśa with love and faith. The food should be taken only once during the daytime for the whole year on the day of vow. Next year on every *Caturthī* the food should be taken only once during night. The third year the food unasked for, should be taken only once in twenty-four hours. During fourth year every *Caturthī* should be observed without taking any food at all remembering, contemplating and meditating upon Lord Gaṇeśa chanting His name with all the love and the Lord should be worshipped.

This way in a prescribed manner performing the vow, one should take *Vrata Snāna* after the completion of four year's period. At that time the *Sādhaka* must get a golden image of Lord Gaṇeśa made. If a golden image is not possible to make, he should make an image of Gaṇeśa with turmeric powder or paste.

A diagram of lotus flower should be made with different colours and a *Kalaśa* should be placed over it. A copper vessel full of rice should be placed over the *Kalaśa* to be covered by two pieces of cloth and the image of Lord Gaṇeśa should be placed over it. Then with the sixteen *Pūjā* materials like *Gandha* etc., Lord Gaṇeśa should be worshipped with full devotion. *Modaka* should be offered as *Naivedya*. After obeisance, circumambulation and prayer the *Sādhaka* alongwith his family, should keep awake during night chanting the *Kīrtana* accompanied by the musical instruments, recitation of *Purāṇa* and *Stotras* of Gaṇeśa, muttering His name etc.

Next day before the sunrise while the horizon starts reddening, one should finish his daily routine, wearing pure clothes, he should offer oblations of sesamum seeds, rice, barley, yellow mustered, ghee and sugar in the sacrificial fire in a prescribed

manner. Taking one of His sixteen names in the dative case and adding *Namaḥ Svāhā,* the *Sādhaka* should pour one oblation in the fire. His sixteen names are—Gaṇa,Gaṇādhipa Kūṣmāṇḍa, Tripurāntaka, Lambodara, Ekadanta, Rukmadaṁṣṭra, Vighnapa, Brahmā, Yama, Varuṇa, Soma, Sūrya, Hutāśana, Gandhamādī and Parameṣṭhī. So the offerings will be like *gaṇāya namaḥ svāhā* and so on. After that, reciting the six lettered *Mantra—"vakratuṇḍāya huṁ"* one hundred and eight oblations should be given. After that *Vyāhṛtis* like *om bhūḥ bhuvaḥ svaḥ* or the *Tāntrika* ones like *Gāṁ, Gīṁ, Gūṁ* may be used and according to the capacity, the *Homa* should be made and then in the end reciting due *Saṅkalpa* the *Pūrṇāhuti* (final oblation) should be poured. In the end ten protectors of the quarters should be given due worship and twenty-four brahmans should be feasted respectfully with *Modaka* and *Khīra. Ācārya* should be propitiated with due *Dakṣiṇā* and a milking cow with a calf. Other brahmans also should be served as the financial conditions permit. In the end those brahmans should be paid due respect and obeisance and be circumambulated.

On the *Caturthīs* of the month *Pauṣa,* Vighneśvara Gaṇeśa should be worshipped and prayed to. A single brahman should be fed with *Modakas* and paid due *Dakṣiṇā.*

The dark *Caturthī* of *Māgha* is known as *Saṅkaṣṭī Caturthī.* Ordinarily every dark *Caturthī* is known as *Saṅkaṣṭī* but that of *Māgha* month has a special importance. That day getting up early in the morning, finishing the daily routine, one should take a *Saṅkalpa* of observing fast, maintaining all rules of celibacy, contemplating and meditating on Śrī Gaṇeśa and chanting His names, pass the day. After the moon-rise, an earthen image of Gaṇeśa should be made and placed on a wooden platform. The image should be having all the weapons, emblems and vehicle of the Lord. First of all, reciting necessary *Mantra* the life should be infused in the statue of Gaṇeśa and then it should be worshipped with all the sixteen required *Pūjā* materials. Then *Modaka* in general and *Modakas* made of sesamum seeds and treacle should

be offered in the form of *Naivedya*. Then water for washing mouth, circumambulation, obeisance and *Puṣpāñjali* should be offered.

After that with a peaceful mind and with devotion, *Gaṇeśa Mantra* should be recited for twenty-one times and then water for ablution is to be offered. The *Mantra* for offering water is as follows—

गणेशाय नमस्तुभ्यं सर्वसिद्धिप्रदायक।
संकष्टहर मे देव गृहाणार्घ्यं नमोऽस्तु ते।।
कृष्णपक्षे चतुर्थ्यां तु सम्पूजित विधूदये।
क्षिप्रं प्रसीद देवेश गृहाणार्घ्यं नमोऽस्तु ते।।

"O bestower of all accomplishments, my obeisance to You. O remover of miseries, kindly accept this ablution of water. Salutations to You. O God of gods, who is specially worshipped on the *Caturthī* of dark fortnight, at the time of moon rise, kindly accept my ablution and salutation."

The above two verses should each be accompanied by *Saṅkaṣṭaharaṇagaṇapataye namaḥ*. This ablution of water should be offered twice. After that with the following *Mantras* the presiding goddess of *Caturthī Tithi* should be offered ablution to—

तिथीनामुत्तमे देवि गणेशप्रियवल्लभे।
सर्वसंकटनाशाय गृहाणार्घ्यं नमोऽस्तु ते।।
चतुर्थ्यै नमः इदमर्घ्यं समर्पयामि।

"The best among all the *Tithis* the beloved goddess of Lord Gaṇeśa, salutations to you. Kindly remove all my troubles and accept this ablution. I pay my obeisance to the presiding goddess of *Caturthī Tithi*. I offer this ablution to her."

Then the moon should be worshipped with all the *Pūjā* materials in prescribed manner. In a copper jar red sandal paste, *Kuśa* and *Dūrvā* grasses, flowers, unbroken rice, leaves of *Śamī* tree, curd and water mixed together should be offered as ablution to the moon reciting the following *Mantra*—

गगनार्णवमाणिक्य चन्द्र दाक्षायणीपते।
गृहाणार्घ्यं मया दत्तं गणेशप्रतिरूपक।।

(*Nārada Purāṇa, Pūrva*. 113.77)

"O ruby from the ocean of sky, the beloved spouse of *Rohiṇī*, the daughter of Dakṣaprajāpati, an image of Lord Gaṇeśa, the moon, please accept this ablution from me."

Then paying obeisance at the feet of Lord Gaṇeśa according to his capacity, one should feed the deserving brahmans with love and respect, satisfying them with sufficient *Dakṣiṇā* and with their permission should himself take meals. This is one of the most auspicious vows which makes the worshipper prosperous and free from worries. This is known as *Vakratuṇḍa Caturthī* also. This vow should start from the month of *Māgha* and must be observed every month. It is an efficacious formula for destroying the troubles.

On the bright *Caturthī* of *Māgha* the *Sādhaka* should observe fast, worship the Lord Gaṇeśa and should break his fast next day on *Pañcamī* with the sesamum seeds. *Gaṁ Swāhā* is the *Mantra* for worshipping and *Gaṁ Namaḥ* etc., are the *Mantras* to station the parts of *Mantra* and the deities in his different limbs of the body. Saying *Āgaccholkāya* Lord Gaṇeśa should be invoked and pronouncing *Gaccholkāya* He should be seen off. After having duly worshipped the Lord should be offered *Modaka* as *Naivedya* followed by ablution, circumambulation etc. After that the *Sādhaka* should make the *Japa* of *Gaṇeśa Gāyatrī* which is given below—

ॐ महोल्काय विद्महे वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि।
तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्।।

This *Caturthī* is known as *Gaurī Vrata* also. On this day the ladies should worship the mother goddess Gaurī alongwith all her *Yoginīs*. Particularly ladies should worship her with *Kunda*, flowers, *Kuṁkuma*, red thread, red flowers, *Ālaktaka* (the red paint with which the ladies colour their feet), incense, lamp, molasses, ginger, milk, *Khīra*, salt and *Pālaka* etc. The ladies whose husbands are alive, should worship deserving brahmans, feed them and pay *Dakṣiṇā* to them. After that they themselves may take meals. This vow has got several other names as *Dhuṇḍhi Vrata*, *Kuṇḍa Vrata*, *Lalitā Vrata* and *Śānti Vrata* etc.

The *Caturthī* of *Phālguna* month is particularly known as *Dhuṇḍhirāja Vrata.* This way after observing fast the golden Gaṇeśa-image should be worshipped with devotion. After completion of the vow, the image should be given to brahman. On this *Caturthī* sesamum seeds are most important. They are used in every act like *Homa,* worship, offering and charity to brahmans. The brahmans should be fed with sesamum preparations and then *Sādhaka* himself should take his food. This *Caturthī* is known as *Manoratha Caturthī*. According to *Matsya Purāṇa* with the difference that all worship should be performed during night, it should continue for a whole year and on the year ending day, a golden Gaṇeśa image should be given to some brahman. The bright *Caturthī* is accepted for this purpose. *Agni Purāṇa* names it as *Avighnā Caturthī.* This is a brief sketch about how to perform the *Caturthī Vrata* in every month during the year.

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जितेन्द्रियैर्जितक्रोधैः स्त्रीरूपं मोहकारणम्।
सर्वमायाकरण्डञ्च कामवर्द्धनकारणम् ॥
ब्रह्मास्त्रं कामदेवस्य दुर्भेद्यं जयकारणम्।
अनिर्मितञ्च विधिना सर्वाद्यं विधिपूर्वजम्॥
मोक्षद्वारकपाटञ्च हरिभक्तिनिरोधनम्।
संसारबन्धनस्तम्भरज्जुरूपमकृन्तनम् ॥

"Even for those who have conquered their senses and anger, faminine beauty, is the cause of infatuation. It is a store of all illusions and the cause of enhancing the sense of cupidity. It is a sure and unfailing weapon of cupid. It is invincible. It causes victory always for him. It is not made by Brahmā; rather it is chronologically senior to him. It is strong shutter to shut the gates of emancipation. It keeps people away from the devotion of God. It is a rope around the pole to fasten the world and it cannot be cut asunder."

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (VI. 55—57)

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Origin of Gaṇeśa Pūjā

—Kalyana Chowdhury

Start with the ode of Lord Gaṇeśa
The God who destroys impediments
For uninterrupted inauguration
Of spiritual and material fulfilments.

Saint Durvāsā was coming from Vaikuṇṭha
Holding the flower of Viṣṇu's boon;
Anyone having it upon the head
Would be worshipped as initial deity soon.

When the flower was given to Indra
He kept it on His elephant's head
The animal prospered with wondered fortune
And Indra's penalty was severely paid.

When the solar family was invited
To see Śrī Śaṅkara's handsome son
The head of the offspring turned to ash
As a result of the interview of Śaturn.

Śiva commanded His generals to bring
The head of anyone pointing north;
Indra's elephant was obviously found
Proving Viṣṇu's prediction's worth.

The sun survived with elephant's head
To be worshipped as the initial deity
He bestows eternal happiness
For His devotee's peace and plenty.



Gaṇeśa Pūjā in Vedic and Puranic Age

It has become a fashion of our times to establish the antiquity of any idea, principle, thing, object or tradition particularly when its origin is clouded and no decisive proofs are available. It is very imperative to discuss the type of proofs to be relied upon, that can decide the point in question. We generally depend on one or more of the following types of proofs—

(1) Literary References—

These are very helpful. If we find references about a thing in a particular literary work, we can be sure that at least at that time when the book was composed, that particular object did exist. But then we must be sure about the chronology of the work and secondly we must be sure about meaning of the reference available. In the long journey of words we often find that they change the meaning. It is not at all necessary that a word must have been used two thousand years before in the same sense which it is now used in. Sometimes some adjectival words become nominal and so quite confusing.

(2) Iconographical or Sculptural Proofs—

This type of proof is no doubt decisive provided their chronological date is unquestionable. But then in certain cases the explanation of iconographical findings assume a very great importance. For example the findings of Mohanjodaro and Harappa excavations and the excavations on other places are yet to be studied and explained unmistakably.

(3) Linguistic and Philological Proofs—

They are interesting and important no doubt but to what extent they can be depended upon is certainly doubtful.

Let us now explore the grounds to decide the existence of the most popular and universal Lord Gaṇeśa. Let us first see the available books which have references regarding Gaṇeśa. There are a number of *Upaniṣads* exclusively devoted to Gaṇeśa. Then there are *Purāṇas* like *Śiva Purāṇa, Skanda Purāṇa, Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* and others. Similarly among the *Upapurāṇas* like *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* and *Mudgala Purāṇa* exclusively describe Gaṇeśa. Then we come to *Gāthā Saptaśatī* of Hāla dated approximately first century B. C. to first century A. D. In the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas* we find certain references which, if authentic, certainly prove that Gaṇeśa as a deity was worshipped in that age and finally we come to the oldest written work in the world—the *Ṛgveda*. We find the mention of the name Gaṇapati in *Ṛgveda* (II. 23.1), then again we find the same Gaṇapati in *Ṛgveda* (X. 112.9). In *Śukla Yajurveda* (23.19) we find *Gaṇapati, Priyapati,* and *Nidhipati* probably for the same deity. In *Śukla Yajurveda* (16. 25) we again find the word Gaṇapati but then it is in plural number. So supposedly there must have been so many *Gaṇapatis*. It is not altogether improbable that the word Gaṇapati must have been used to convey the sense of group leader or commander. There are several *Mantras* where a deity like Brahmaṇaspati and Bṛhaspati has been mentioned. The nature and attributes attached to that Brahmaṇaspati or Bṛhaspati are similar to those of Gaṇapati. So there are several scholars who are of the opinion that there is no difference between Brahmaṇaspati and Gaṇapati and both are one and the same. But then by the same token the oneness of Brahmaṇaspati and Indra also can be established. In such case I do not think it will be proper to say that Indra and Bṛhaspati were one and the same and Brahmaṇaspati, Bṛhaspati or Gaṇapati are forked out. There are certain *Gaṇeśa- Gāyatrī-Mantras* attributed to different *Saṁhitās, Āraṇyakas* and *Upaniṣads* where we find the word *Dantī* which may indicate the present tusker form of Gaṇapati. Eventhough how far it is reliable, is a matter of debate. In this *Mantra* the word *Tatpuruṣa* also has been used for Gaṇeśa. *Tatpuruṣa* is one of the most prominent names of Lord Śiva. On this ground some scholars establish oneness between Śiva and Gaṇeśa.

So far as these *Mantras* from *Ṛgveda* are concerned, in the *Viniyoga* of oft quoted *Mantra*—'गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे'—the deity is supposed to be Indra. If we take it that Indra is the deity eulogized in this *Mantra,* the word *Gaṇapati* can be no doubt a befitting adjective to him.

In the later *Karmakāṇḍa* period there developed a tendency to relate a particular *Mantra* with a certain deity. For example—"केतुं कृण्वन्नकेतवे" and 'Śannodevī' are attached with *Ketu* and *Sanaiścara* eventhough we know fully well that the planetary deities have got nothing to do with these *Mantras.* So it will not be very safe to conclude that Brahmaṇaspati, Bṛhaspati and Gaṇapati are the different names of the same god. However it requires a very extensive research to decide what is what nor is it altogether impossible for Gaṇapati to have developed from the Vedic deity Brahmaṇaspati or Bṛhaspati, specially when we have got unmistakable proof that Gaṇeśa-worship is very very ancient in India and even in foreign countries.

Iconographical proofs are available earliest in Gupta period of Indian history but it does not mean that Gaṇeśa worship did not exist before that period.

(4) Linguistic and Phonetic Proof—

There was a Roman deity Janus. We notice a striking resemblance in Janus and Gaṇeśa. The phonetic arrangement of both the words point out oneness of the two specially when we notice that both are the deities of beginning and the deities of door but unless and until the other coroborative proofs are available to support this theory it will be very unsafe to come to any conclusion. By the same token it does not seem advisable to establish identification between Brahmaṇaspati and Gaṇapati. If we go through the *Sahasranāma Stotras,* we will find that many rather most of the names will be attributable to almost all deities. Will it mean that all the gods are one and the same? It is another thing that *Vedas* say—"एकं सत् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति" on the ground of this any god cannot be differentiated from any other god and then there will be no occasion to discuss

whether Gaṇapati or Brahmaṇaspati are one or the different.

Gaṇapati in Vedic Time —

The famous hymn of *Ṛgveda* which is known as *Gaṇapati Sūkta*—'गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे' (II. 23. 1) contains ninteen *Mantras* in all. Therein the concerned deity to be prayed in one, five, nine, eleven, seventeen and ninteen hymns is Bṛhaspati. Among the rest of the *Mantras* the concerned deity is Brahmaṇaspati. It means while singing the praise of Bṛhaspati *(Mantra* I) he has been referred to as Gaṇapati. So we can say if we so desire that in the *Ṛgvaidika* age either Bṛhaspati was worshipped in the form of Gaṇapati or Gaṇapati in the form of Bṛhaspati. There is another *Sūkta* known as *Gaṇapati Sūkta* in the eighth *Maṇḍala* of *Ṛgveda.* Indra is the deity to be praised therein. In other words the main deity of this so-called *Gaṇapati Sūkta* is not Gaṇapati but Indra. Therefore if we are prepared to accept Indra and Gaṇapati both to be one and the same, only then its name *Gaṇapati Sūkta* can be justified otherwise the Lambodara and Gajānana of today is not praised in that *Sūkta.* Now let us consider the relation between Brahmaṇaspati and Gaṇapati. In this analysis we have to depend on the merits and attributes of the deities concerned in the *Mantra* of *Ṛgveda* (II. 23. 1) and (II. 23. 19) the seer says—"O Brahmaṇaspati, you are the leader of the gods. You are the best *Ṛṣi* amongst the *Ṛṣis,* the richest holder of foodgrains, the Lord of the best *Mantras.* I invoke you. O Lord, hearing my invocation, come in my sacrificial camp alongwith your protecting potencies and take your seat here. O god, you are the controller of the universe. Knowing the intention of this *Sūkta* please gratify my sons and grandsons. They are always well protected whom a god like you protects. I request you that we be strong alongwith our sturdy progenies and continue singing praises to you."

Addressing Bṛhaspati the seer says—"O God Bṛhaspati, you have been born of truth. O God, you please give us the effulgence of *Brahma* and the secular prosperity. The best brahmans worship you. Kindly provide us with such a glory and effulgence which may shine in the world and may become as a means to the meritorious deeds."

In the *Gaṇapati Atharvaśīrṣa Upaniṣad* it is said—'त्वमेव केवलं कर्तासि', 'सर्वं जगत् इदं त्वत्तः तिष्ठति', 'त्वमेव केवलं तत्त्वमसि', 'सर्वतो मां पाहि, पाहि, समन्तात्'. This description is similar to the praises offered to Bṛhaspati. Those who hastily jump to a conclusion can say that on the basis of the striking similarities between the praises of these two deities, both are identified. But those who feel their way cautiously and guardedly, will not be convinced. According to Sāyaṇa, Brahmaṇaspati and Gaṇapati are one, because according to him *Brahma* means *Mantra* and *Pati* means lord. So Sāyaṇa considers Brahmaṇaspati to be the lord of *Mantras*. He is not very eloquent that Brahmaṇaspati and Bṛhaspati are one. Regarding the etymology and meaning of Bṛhaspati and Brahmaṇaspati there seems to be a whirlpool of opinions. No two scholars—Western and Indian agree on one point. Some say Bṛhaspati is another form of *Agni* while the others are of the opinion that Bṛhaspati or Brahmaṇaspati are Indra himself and nobody else. Still others say that Bṛhaspati means the leader of *Mantra*-singers. Some of the scholars opine that Brahmā is an official post. Just like Brahmā is the seniormost among the gods so a Brahmā in a sacrificial ceremony is seniormost among the priestly office-bearers like *Adhvaryu, Udgātā* and *Ṛtvik* etc. This way Brahmaṇaspati means a senior among the *Brahmās*. In the hands of Bṛhaspati there are certain weapons like a golden axe. The horses of his chariot are of copper colour. He was an invincible warrior and on many occasions fought for Indra. He was graceful on his worshippers. He frees the meritorious and pure persons from crisis and bestows prosperity upon them. In the later period he became priest of gods and but for his help no sacrificial ceremony could be completed easily and without hindrance. His other names are Sadasaspati and Jyeṣṭharāja. He had seven faces, a beautiful tongue, sharp horns and one hundred wings. He had a golden hue and a dingling voice. From the above description it is not altogether misconceived that Bṛhaspati of the *Ṛgveda* and Gaṇapati in his *Paurāṇika* form, have some ethnic relations. Skandaswāmī of seventh century has written

in the beginning of his *Ṛgbhāṣya*—

विघ्नेश विधिमार्तण्डचन्द्रेन्द्रोपेन्द्रवन्दित।
नमो गणपते तुभ्यं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पते।।

This verse establishes in no uncertain terms the identifying relation between Gaṇapati and Brahmaṇaspati. It seems that in the seventh century A. D. Brahmaṇaspati, Bṛhaspati and Gaṇapati were unquestionably unified and became one. There may be several references like that of Skandaswāmī in the later period.

Now there is only one doubt to be clarified whether it was Brahmaṇaspati who slowly and gradually became Gaṇapati or Gaṇapati was simultaneously worshipped as an independent deity and somehow both of them merged together and became one. Here one thing should not be forgotten that Bṛhaspati though not Brahmaṇaspati, has still his independent existence in the form of heavenly priest and a presiding deity of a planet named after him. Another question which is still unanswered, is how the *Paurāṇika* myths, fables and parables regarding the birth and origin of Gaṇeśa sprang up and if there is any relation even remotest possible, with the Vedic Gaṇapati Since it is not possible to discuss these points here, we will now proceed to see and examine the existence of Gaṇeśa, His form, weapons and emblems and importance in the *Paurāṇika* and *Tāntrika* age.

In the *Paurāṇika* age for whatever reasons, Gaṇeśa was a fully established and reverred deity among the entire Hindu community and ultimate God and Supreme *Brahma* in the sect which followed *Gāṇapatya* school of philosophy. In every act of religious, social, educational or commercial importance it was compulsory to worship Gaṇeśa in the beginning. His foremost *Pūjā* was unchallenged and still continue to remain so. It is so prominantly popular that 'Śrī Gaṇeśa' has become an idiomatic expression for beginning. Even in the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī only after worshipping Gaṇeśa any other auspicious act of marriage was done.

Gaṇeśa in Gaṇeśa Purāṇa—

Gaṇeśa Purāṇa is a very important scriptural work for the

followers of *Gāṇapatya* sect. In this *Purāṇa* there are several *Stotras* of Gaṇeśa, the manners and procedures of worshipping Gaṇeśa, one thousand names of Gaṇeśa and last but most important *Gaṇeśa Gītā* are found. In *Gaṇeśa Gītā* Lord Gaṇeśa preached the ultimate knowledge to His devotee Vareṇya. It is on the pattern of *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* taught by Lord Kṛṣṇa. There are stories of His pastimes like the destruction of Sindūrāsura on the banks of Narmadā and many others. This story explains why Lord Gaṇeśa likes vermilion most. The story says that once Sindūrāsura threw Lord Gaṇeśa in Narmadā. When He came out of the water He searched the demon and killed him. The blood that came out of the body of Sindūrāsura made the entire water of Narmadā red. Even now the red stones found in Narmadā are referred to as *Narmadā Gaṇapati* and worshipped. They do not require any temple or any *Prāṇapratiṣṭhā* (infusing life following the scriptural procedures). He smeared His whole body with the warm blood of Sindūrāsura and so His body became red. That is the reason why Gaṇeśa is worshipped with vermilion and it is His favourite material of *Pūjā*. By killing this demon He fulfilled the purpose of His incarnation.

Gaṇeśa Purāṇa gives a bit different version of why a person becomes object of blasphemy by seeing moon on *Gaṇeśa-Caturthī*. The cause of the moon being cursed is also different. As described in *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* one day Lord Śiva gave a fruit to Kumāra and avoided Gaṇeśa. The moon unfortunately for him laughed at Gaṇeśa, and so Gaṇeśa cursed him. *Gaṇeśa Jayantī* happens to be on the fourth day of bright fortnight in the month of *Vaiśākha, Jyeṣṭha, Bhādrapada* and even *Māgha*. Siddhi and Buddhi are supposed to be His wives. This relation of Gaṇeśa with Siddhi and Buddhi is a little allegorical. *Siddhi* is accomplishment and *Buddhi* is intellect or intelligence. So these two like chaste-wives always attend on Him. In other words Lord Gaṇeśa is a bestower of accomplishment and intellect to His devotees. His twelve names are very famous and most popular. They are remembered in the beginning of any *Pūjā*. *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* takes Lord Gaṇeśa to be

ultimate reality or *Brahma.* In every *Kalpa* and in every *Yuga* He manifests Himself in different forms to fulfil the object as mentioned in *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*—

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्।।
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे।।

(IV. 7-8)

In *Satyayuga* He was Vināyaka, the son of Kaśyapa. He had ten arms. His mount was lion. He had an extremely shining body. In that age He killed Devāntaka and Narāntaka, removed the unmanageable load from earth and re-established Indra alongwith other gods in paradise. In *Tretāyuga* He was Mayūreśvara, the son of Lord Śiva, had six arms and white colour of His body. His mount was peacock. He destroyed the demon named Sindhu. In *Dvāpara Yuga* He became Gajānana the son of Lord Śiva. The hue of His body was red and He had four arms. His mount was mouse. In this age He killed the demon Sindūra and taught *Gaṇeśa Gītā* to Vareṇya. In *Kaliyuga* He will be known as Dhūmraketu when He will incarnate Himself. He will be of smoky hue, will have two arms and His mount will be horse. The same *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* tells about His mount to be mouse itself. The real knowledge of Gaṇeśa concept can be had through meditation but even if His image is worshipped with love and devotion it is possible to obtain His grace. *Mudgala Purāṇa* is opined by the scholars to be comparatively modern. It gives a detailed description of thirty two images of Gaṇeśa. In *Skanda Purāṇa* He is supposed to create obstacles as well as to remove them. He is bestower of all pleasures. In that *Purāṇa* He is supposed to be made by Pārvatī as a statue and then to have infused life in. In *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* He is described as son of Śiva and Pārvatī but at the same time He is not born from the womb of Pārvatī. This *Purāṇa* prohibits offering of *Tulasī* leaves in *Gaṇeśa Pūjā* except on fourth day of bright fortnight of *Bhādrapada* month. *Padma Purāṇa* also gives twelve names of Gaṇeśa but

slight differently. The names mentioned by *Padma Purāṇa* are Gaṇapati, Vighnarāja, Lambatuṇḍa, Gajānana, Dvaimātura, Heramba, Ekadanta, Gaṇādhipa, Vināyaka, Cārukarṇa, Paśupāla and Bhavātmaja.

In eighth or ninth century A. D. *Gaṇeśa Pūjā* was popular in Nepal and Tibet also. In the days of Śaṅkarācārya the *Gāṇapatya* sect and the worship of Gaṇeśa was very much in practice. In first century A. D. in the *Gāthā Saptaśatī*—'गणाहिवइ' (गणाधिपति) is specifically mentioned. Mentioning this epithet Hāla Sātavāhana praises Lord Gaṇeśa. In the period of fifth and sixth centuries of christ so many images of Gaṇeśa were made and there are so many sculptural findings at different places.

To conclude this article we can draw a conclusion about the chronological development of *Gaṇeśa Pūjā.* There may be four stages or even periods we can call it. (1) Vedic concept—formerly it was Brahmaṇaspati or Bṛhaspati. There was some visible relation among Brahmaṇaspati, Bṛhaspati, Gaṇeśa and even Indra. It is just a possibility, not a certainty because concluding proofs are not available. (2) After that we find two contradictory aspects of Gaṇeśa e.g., Gaṇapati and Vināyaka. These two in the later period somehow managed to become one. (3) In the third stage we come to see that eventhough Gaṇapati and Vināyaka are of contradictory dispositions and temperament to each other but (a very important development), these two names Gaṇapati and Vināyaka indicated one and the same deity. (4) And finally in the fourth stage it is quite possibly the Puranic contribution, Gaṇeśa has assumed a big curly trunk which gives Him the shape of 'ॐ'. Whatever be the case the present conception of Gaṇeśa is so common and widely accepted that nobody even bothers to look into the original shape and form of the deity which is sufficient to bind the country and society in one thread of unity.

Immediate dispeller of Misfortune

—Sailesh Brahmachari

Every Hindu knows that no worship of any god or goddess can be performed without an initial worship to Gaṇeśa i.e., at the very outset of performing any kind of auspicious work Gaṇeśa must be invoked first. He is the ultimate reality, He is invoked by all deities and even the trinity also. He is the remover of all obstacles.

There is a hymn on Gaṇapati in *Śrī Nārada Purāṇa* which is highly propitious. It has been mentioned in that *Purāṇa,* that one who repeats it eleven times everyday with devotion, all his miseries disappear as a piece of camphor vanishes in air. It fulfils all desires also. If repeated hundred times daily continuous for six months, Gaṇeśajī comes into appearance. Śrī Nāradajī says, if this hymn is repeated nine times daily meditating on the events behind the names of Gaṇeśajī, mentioned in the hymn, one is sure to attain salvation even while living in this world.

The hymn runs thus—

प्रथमं वक्रतुण्डं च एकदन्तं द्वितीयकम्।
तृतीयं कृष्णपिङ्गाक्षं गजवक्त्रं चतुर्थकम्।।
लम्बोदरं पञ्चमं च षष्ठं विकटमेव च।
सप्तमं विघ्नराजं च धूम्रवर्णं तथाऽष्टकम्।।
नवमं भालचन्द्रं च दशमं तु विनायकम्।
एकादशं गणपतिं द्वादशं तु गजाननम्।।
द्वादशैतानि नामानि त्रिसन्ध्यं यः पठेन्नरः।
न च विघ्नभयं तस्य सर्वसिद्धिश्च जायते।।
जपेद् गणपतिस्तोत्रं षड्भिर्मासैः फलं लभेत्।
संवत्सरेण सिद्धिं च लभते नात्र संशयः।।

Following are the names with events connected with them.

(1) Vakratuṇḍa—

Devil Mātsaryāsura (the envy incarnate) was killed by Gaṇeśa with His twisted trunk. Hence His name Vakratuṇḍa. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* describes Gaṇeśajī as Vakratuṇḍa, having a sheaf of corn in His twisted trunk. His vehicle is lion.

(2) Ekadanta—

Once Paraśurāmajī went to Kailasa to pay respects to Lord Śiva. When Paraśurāmajī arrived there, Śrī Gaṇeśajī was guarding the entrance of His father's chamber and did not allow Paraśurāmajī to let in. Being refused entrance, Paraśurāmajī became furious and broke one of His tusks with his axe. Since then He is Ekadanta.

(3) Kṛṣṇapiṅgākṣa—

Eyes of a child elephant look black with a tinge of yellowish brown colour. So this name was given to Him.

(4) Gajavaktra—

After Gaṇeśa was born all the gods and planets rushed to see the child. Śani (the planet Saturn) also went there, but would not look at the child as he had a curse on him that anyone he would look at, would loose his head.

Pārvatī being Śani's sister insisted that Śani should look at the child as He is his nephew. On being insisted Śani looked at the child and immediately His head got chopped off from the body. Lord Viṣṇu was also present there. Seeing Pārvatī highly grieved at the incident, Nārāyaṇa immediately ordered to bring the head, of anyone who would be lying with his head northward. A child elephant was found in that condition and his head was brought and Viṣṇu fixed it on the headless child's neck and breathed life in Him. Thus the child became elephant-headed which means Gajānana.

(5) Lambodara—

Krodhāsura the demon of anger used to harass human and celestial beings alike. On being prayed to, Gaṇeśa incarnated as Lambodara. He killed the Krodhāsura and saved gods and human beings. His vehicle was a mouse.

(6) Vikaṭa—

The demon Kāmāsura is lust personified. To destroy this demon Gaṇeśajī took His incarnation as Vikaṭa. Vikaṭa means having a monstrous look. When Vikaṭa appeared before the demon Kāmāsura the demon could not stand the look, and immediately disappeared. Vikaṭa's vehicle was a peacock, which later on He gave to His brother Kārtikeya. Since then the peacock became Kārtikeya's vehicle.

(7) Vighnarāja—

As Vighnarāja Gaṇeśajī destroyed Mamatāsura the desire incarnate. His vehicle was a serpent known as Śeṣa Nāga.

(8) Dhūmravarṇa—

To destroy Mānābhimānāsura Gaṇeśa became Dhūmravarṇa. The complexion of His body became smoke-coloured and hence this name.

(9) Bhālacandra—

Once after a heavy meal Gaṇeśajī was going back to His home riding on His mouse, but suddenly He fell off the mouse. The moon seeing this sight began to laugh. At this Gaṇeśajī felt insulted and cursed the moon that he will never shine in full glory everyday. He will wane day by day and ultimately vanish from the sky. Being cursed, the moon along with other gods rushed to Gaṇeśajī to pacify Him.

When the moon got Him pacified, He blessed the moon and said one fortnight he will wane, the next fortnight he will recover his glory alternately and further said that the moon will shine in His forehead as an ornament. Since then Gaṇeśajī is called Candrabhāla or Bhālacandra.

(10) Vināyaka—

Vāmana Purāṇa says that once Pārvatī while bathing, rubbed of the filth and dirt of her body. She created a child out of that. She named the child Gaṇeśa. So Gaṇeśa was created without the help of Śiva, who was her husband.

One of the names of Lord Śiva is Nāyaka. As Gaṇeśa came into being without Nāyaka's help, He was named Vināyaka.

(11) Gaṇapati—

The lesser gods were very often harrased by demons. To find out a way of deliverance from that harrasment, the gods approached Lord Śiva. Lord Śiva then created a mind-born child for their protection. This child was Gaṇeśa. Śiva appointed Gaṇeśa as the leader of *Gaṇas*—the celestial hordes and gave Him a trident to combat with the demons. Being leader of the *Gaṇas*, Gaṇeśa is known as Gaṇapati.

(12) Gajānana—

Same as No. 4.

There was a king in Malava named Candrāṅgada. Indumatī was his wife. Once the king went for hunting. In the forest an ogress fell in love with him. She devoured his prime minister. The king hid himself in a lake. There a *Nāga* girl kidnapped him to *Pātāla*. When he refused her proposal for marriage she tied and imprisoned him. Twelve years passed. Indumatī gave up all the marks of *Saubhāgya*.

Once *Devarṣi* Nārada visited the palace and informed Indumatī that Candrāṅgada was very much alive and advised her to perform a particular vow of Gaṇeśa for a month. She did it. As a subtle reaction the heart of that *Nāga* girl changed and she released Candrāṅgada from imprisonment. He came to that very lake where his people received him most cordially and everybody was happy. Indumatī's joy knew no bounds when she saw her husband alive again.

—*Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* (54-55)

The four orders of society were created by Me out of the three modes of *Prakṛti* predominant in each and apportioning corresponding actions to them; though the author of this creation wise men know Me, the immortal and beginningless Lord to be a non-doer. Since I have no desire for the fruit of actions; actions do not contaminate Me. Even he who thus knows Me in reality, is not bound by actions. Having known this, action was performed even by the ancient seekers for liberation.

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (III. 18—20)

Gaṇeśa in Pāñcarātra Āgama

Pāñcarātra Āgama is an authentic treatise of *Vaiṣṇava* sect. The followers of Vaiṣṇavism take Viṣṇu as supreme reality and the ultimate deity. The *Vaiṣṇavas* rely upon *Vedas*, *Smṛtis* and *Pāñcarātra Āgama* so far as the concept of ultimate reality, its nature and form, and means of realising that ultimate reality and the nature of emancipation are concerned. *Pāñcarātra Āgama* declares that Viṣṇu is the forerunner among all gods. The other gods of lesser dignity are inferior to Him. There is no wonder because the word Viṣṇu has been derived form the verb root 'विष्लृ व्याप्तौ'. Etymologically the word Viṣṇu means one who pervades everything, everywhere and every time and even beyond time by nature and qualities. So, it can be concluded that gods, individual *Jīvas* and material objects whatever we can perceive and the objects even beyond our perception—are all pervaded by Viṣṇu from within and from without. In the form of inner soul He controls everything. *Pāñcarātra Āgama* describes the grandeur of the ultimate reality, how to instal His images in the houses or temples, how to worship Him and finally they discuss the ways, means and styles of constructing Viṣṇu temples. These *Āgamas* accept the other deities as a member of the retinue that attends on Lord Viṣṇu. They further discuss about how and where to construct the *Gopura* and *Vimāna* etc., and which god should be installed at what point in the temple according to their grade and power.

The word Gaṇeśa grammatically means 'गणानां ईशः' e.g., the lord of *Gaṇas*. The *Gaṇas* of Lord Śiva are known as *Pramathas*. Being the lord of these *Pramathas*, He is supposed to punish those who inculcate animosity to Lord Śiva. Being the remover of obstacles He occupies the position of Vighneśvara.

Followers of *Śrī Vaiṣṇava* sect e.g., the followers of *Viśiṣṭādvaita* school of philosophy completely surrender to Lord Viṣṇu and expect Him to provide every necessary thing for them. Since the Lord Gaṇeśa wards off all the obstacles and bestows the desired objects on His devotees—and *Śrī Vaiṣṇavas* have no doubt about this form of Lord Gaṇeśa in their heart— they include the Gaṇeśa-worship in their programme of spiritual disciplining. Generally in the *Vaiṣṇava* pantheon only four-mouthed Brahmā etc., are not included but Gaṇeśa the son of Lord Śiva is also a member of the *Vaiṣṇava* pantheon. Apart from Him some other gods also are known as *Gaṇanāyaka*. For example—"कुमुद, कुमुदाक्ष, सुमुख, शंकुकर्ण, पुण्डरीकाक्ष" etc., are recognised by *Pāñcarātra* as the leaders of groups of smaller gods. Even then only Vināyaka is famous by the name Gaṇeśa and *Vaiṣṇavas* do not have any doubt about it.

In the surrounding walls and *Vimānas* of the *Vaiṣṇava* temples, the gods like Brahmā and the protectors of the eight quarters are given a suitable place and position and their images are built—this has been prescribed in *Pāñcarātra* books. *Sanatkumāra Saṁhitā* says—

कौशिकं च गणेशं च कंदर्पं स्कन्दमेव च।
आग्नेयादिषु कोणेषु यथासंख्यं प्रकल्पयेत्।।

(*Indrarātra* V. 31)

"Kauśika should be installed in South-East corner, Gaṇeśa in the South-West, Kandarpa in the North-West and Skanda should be installed in North-East."

The same book at another place says—

गणेशसिंहयोर्मध्ये कुर्यान्मित्रं विचक्षणः।
श्रीधरस्य गणेशस्य मध्ये तु वरुणं न्यसेत्।।

"A sculptural expert should fix a position to sun god in between Gaṇeśa and the lion and Varuṇa in between Śrīdhara and Gaṇeśa."

From these gods of the *Vaiṣṇava* retinue the devotees expect their final good. For example the same *Saṁhitā* says—

कुमारी च कुमारश्च गणेशश्च विनायकः।
सिद्धाश्च किंनराश्चापि मङ्गलं प्रदिशन्तु नः।।

(*Ṛṣirātra* Ch. 6)

"The deities such as Kumārī, Kumāra, Gaṇeśa, Vināyaka, Siddhas and Kiṁnaras, be auspicious to us."

While doing the act of *Pratiṣṭhāpana* of a Gaṇeśa image, the *Gaṇeśa Gāyatrī* which begins with' महोल्काय' is accepted. The same *Gaṇeśa Gāyatrī* adding *Svāhā* in the end should be used for invoking Gaṇeśa. In the act of worshipping Gaṇeśa, *Gaṇapati Gāyatrī* is prescribed to be used. *Gaṇeśa Gāyatrī Mantra* is given below—

ॐ नमो गणाधिपतये शूर्पकर्णाय विद्महे।
कोटिरक्षाय धीमहि तन्नो गणपतिः प्रचोदयात्।।

(*Sanatkumāra Saṁhitā* I. 94)

The Tantricists are very particular about using certain *Mudrās* (making certain figures with the help of hands and fingers). There is a verse in *Śabdakalpadruma* describing importance of *Mudrās* which runs as under—

मोदनात् सर्वदेवानां द्रावणात् पापसंततेः।
तस्मान्मुद्रेति सा ख्याता सर्वकामार्थसाधिनी।।

(III. 745)

"Since the gods are pleased by *Mudrās* and since they are capable of melting the chains of sins committed in previous births, they are called *Mudrās*. They are capable of bestowing all desires ."

Thus the word *Mudrā* is derivative of the verb root *Mud.* In the books like *Lakṣmī Tantra, Viṣṇu Saṁhitā* and *Viśvāmitra Saṁhitā* , it is mentioned that by worshipping Gaṇeśa installed in the *Vimāna* of the temple, His *Mudrās* must be demonstrated. The detailed procedure of *Gaṇeśa Pūjā* alongwith the order, procedure and *Mantras* has been compiled in *Nāradīya Saṁhitā*.

So many gods as presiding deities of the letters of alphabet are mentioned in these books. Among them Gaṇeśa is the presiding deity of *Oṅkāra*. This way among the gods related to Lord Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa the son of Lord Śiva, occupies an important place and all the worshippers of Viṣṇu do worship Gaṇeśa also.

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Lord Gaṇeśa–Concept, Source and Development

—*J. R. Kamath*

Apart from the instincts of hunger, thirst, sex, common to all sentient creatures, for man, religion is the most common characteristic, universal in its nature, that governs his life.'Thou shalt not make a graven map of God,' said the idealist, but the common man found it difficult to worship Him without a visible symbol that his imagination and fancies could take him and fix into strange combination of lion-man, boar-man, elephant-man, bird-man, and animal and bird gods. These images, evolved thousands of years ago, bear their own philosophical language, the language of the idol, the sacred image. It arose out of the matrix of the absolute in the consciousness of highly gifted contemplatives.

"And while those whose vision is limited to the lower ranges of life, to the relative rationalizing mind, and even to those whose religion remains at that systematic and flat level, whether they are atheistic moderns or whether they are missionaries for some religion, or ideology at that level, while they always fail to understand idols and condemn at once all idols, because they have shut themselves off wilfully, or have been sealed off by their conditioning from the deepest intuitional insights, it is not so with the great masses of the common people, who easily recognize this stone and wood language of the spirit. They are never at a loss to get the eternal message of the grand symbols" (John Spiers in *What India means to Me* page 20).

In this fancy of finding a concrete expression to the abstract, the Absolute, he discovered and adopted a symbol for that power that removes all the obstructions that beset him in his dealings in

the world; and that perhaps may be one of the reasons in discovering the strange god, elephant-headed god, Gaṇeśa.

Various names of Gaṇeśa and the literature—

Gaṇeśa or Gaṇapati (lord of *Gaṇas* or hosts, the lord of the attendants of Śiva), is known by different names e.g., Vināyaka (the remover of the obstructions), Lambodara (hang-bellied), Ekadanta (having one tusk), Lambakarṇa (long-eared), Gajānana, Vighnarāja, Dvaimātura, Gaṇādhipa, Heramba, Upa-Ekadanta, Vakratuṇḍa Ekadaṁṣṭra, Kṛṣṇapiṅgākṣa, Gajavaktra, Vikaṭa, Dhūmravarṇa, Bhālacandra, etc. *Amarakoṣa* gives some of the various names of Gaṇeśa (*Gaṇa+Īśa*); and so also do the various *Nāma-Stotras* of Gaṇeśa.

There are various *Stotras* composed in praise of Gaṇeśa, indicating his great popularity. Considerable literature exists in *Saṁskṛta* related to Him, of which some may be mentioned. They are—*Gaṇapati Mahimnaḥ Stotra* (attributed to Puṣpadanta); *Gaṇeśa Stavarāja* (in *Rudra Yāmala*); *Gaṇapati Stotra* (in *Śāradā Tantra*); *Gaṇeśa Stotra* (in the *Matsya, Padma, Varāha* and *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇas*); *Gaṇeśa Pañcarātra* and *Gaṇeśa Bhujaṅga* (attributed to Śaṅkara); *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa*—a later work—is devoted to the glorifications of Gaṇeśa and mention the thousand names of Gaṇeśa.

Gāyatrī of Gaṇeśa—

(1) ॐ एकदन्ताय विद्महे वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्।

(2) ॐ तत्पुरुषाय विद्महे वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्।

Bīja Mantra of Gaṇeśa—

(1) *Gaṁ* (गं)—*Ga* (ग) means Gaṇeśa; *Bindu* (.) means the dispeller of sorrow.

(2) *Glauṁ* (ग्लौं) *Ga* (ग) means Gaṇeśa, *La* (ल) means that which pervades, '*Au*' (औ) means lustre and brilliance, and (.) *Bindu* means the dispeller of sorrow.

Bīja Mantra or seed *Mantras* generally consisting of a single letter (or sometimes of several syllables) have a subtle and mystic meaning. They are extremely powerful and are credited with the

power of bringing or evolving their corresponding divine forms or manifestations before the meditating devotee.

These *Mantras* act directly on the *Nāḍīs* or nerve-tubes of the astral body. They vibrate on the *Cakras* or psychic centres along the spine, acting as a subtle message, releasing blockages and allowing the *Kuṇḍalinī* energy to flow more freely. In *Mantras* the names and forms are merged inseparably. The *Bīja Mantras*—aspects of the Supreme *Mantra Om*—are derived from the fifty primeval sounds and are very powerful; they are not given at initiation. Although on the surface they seem to be meaningless (as is usually thought by those who receive them at their initiation in transcendental meditation), they have an inner mystic meaning (*Nāma-Japa* by Sister Vandanā p. 194). Consciousness and vibration are interlinked and related in manifestation through a number of intermediate stages. This enables consciousness on the one hand to project itself into manifestation through the agency of sound not necessarily the same as we know it, but a far subtler and complex in nature, indicated by the *Saṁskṛta* word *Śabda*.

The concept of Gaṇapati and its source and development—

The ferocity of mother nature is well-known. Even in recent times we had experienced great earthquakes, tornados, thunder-bolts, floods etc., in spite of marvellous modern advancement in science—bringing in its train vast devastation, uprooting big trees, destruction of several houses, mass extinction of men, animals and beasts, floods and epidemics etc. And yet certain phenomena in nature are pleasing, vivifying and benignant. The rays of the sun filling the heaven and the earth vivify the world at the end of the night and continues its due course as usual (*Ṛgveda* IV. 53. 3). The terrible destructive phenomena the Aryans attributed to Rudra who went about howling with the stormy winds (Maruts), who were his sons (*Rudrīyas*). Rudra had his healing and beneficial powers founded partly on the fertilizing or purifying action of the thunder-storms and partly on the negative action of sparing those he might slay. This deprecation of his wrath led to the application

of the euphamistic epithet Śiva which became the regular name of Rudra's historical successor in post-Vedic mythology.

And in spite of all these ferocities of nature, human nature does not believe in a purely malignant power reigning the universe. The dreadful phenomena they attributed to the wrath of god, Rudra, which they believed can be appeased by prayer, praise and offerings. Then the god, Rudra becomes in the post-Vedic period Śiva the benignant. This appears to be the natural process. Consequently belief in such a god as Rudra—Śiva became established in India in ancient times. With this development, the Śiva became the Supreme ruler and the pervader of the universe, a knowledge of whom contributed to eternal bliss. *Rudrīyas* who went on howling with the stormy winds became the attendants and sons of Śiva and their leader was named as Gaṇapati (the lord of the hosts), son of Śiva and Pārvatī, or Pārvatī alone.

Bhaṇḍārakara writes—"None of the Gupta inscriptions contain any mention of name Gaṇapati. But in two of the caves of Ellora there are groups of images of Kāla, Kālī, the seven Mothers or *Śaktis* and Gaṇapati. These caves are to be referred to the latter part of the eighth century. So that between the end of the fifth and the end of the eighth century the Gaṇapati cult must have come into practice and the *Smṛti Yājñavalkya* must have been written not earlier than sixth century. Another inscription and an old relic which indicate the prevalence of the worship of Gaṇapati are found at a place called Ghatiyals, 22 miles north-west of Jodhpur. There is a column there, on the top of which there are four images of Gaṇapati facing the four quarters. In the opening sentence of the inscription engraved on it an obeisance is made to Vināyaka. The date of the inscription is *Vikrama Saṁvat* 918=862 A. D. (see Bhaṇḍārakara's Collective Works Vol. IV. p. 212).

According to some, the earliest Gaṇapati scriptures belong to the Gupta period and the earliest image is from Bhumara (5th century).

Evidently the deity's origin must be much later than the Vedic-

period. There is no mention of Gaṇapati in the Vedic text. Today He is worshipped with the chanting of the *Ṛgveda Mantra* which is as follows—

गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे
कविं कवीनामुपमश्रवस्तमम्।
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत
आ नः शृण्वन्नूतिभिः सीद सादनम्।।

(*Ṛgveda* II. 23.1, II.6. 29—32)

"We invoke You, Supreme Lord, suprascient amongst preceptors, who is the head of the common folk, a supreme seer amongst seers, superb in glory, and the supreme Lord of the hymns. Listening to us may You occupy this seat at this place of worship coming with all Your protections (1). Through Your favours, even the benevolent nature's bounties enjoy their share of worship, O mighty Lord Supreme. As the sun generates dawns with his light, so You are the source of divine knowledge (2)."

This *Sūkta* is usually chanted by priests in the course of the Vedic rituals, for securing the blessings of Gaṇapati and for warding off many an obstacle that may intercept the performance of the rituals and for bringing peace and happiness to the devotee. The epithet Gaṇapati here in the *Ṛgveda* refers not to Him but to Bṛhaspati, the Vedic god of wisdom. It is this element later on resulted to the confusion of identifying Gaṇeśa with Bṛhaspati. Bhaṇḍārakara attributes Gaṇeśa's reputation for wisdom to the confusion resulting from this Ṛgvedic reference.

According to Macdonell Bṛhaspati is a purely Indian deity, the double accent and the parallel name Brahmaṇaspati indicate that the first member is the genetive of a noun *Bṛh* from the same root as *Brahman* and that the name thus means 'Lord of prayer.' He is said to be the generator of all prayers and without Him sacrifice does not succeed. He is said to help and protect the pious man to prolong life and remove diseases (vide *A Vedic Reader for Students* by Macdonell p. 83-84). These qualities of Bṛhaspati also added to the confusion in making Gaṇeśa being identified with

Bṛhaspati and applying the particular *Sūkta* to invoke the presence of Gaṇapati and secure His blessings at the commencement of all religious ceremonies.

Gaṇeśa is the leader of the hosts, known as Maruts. Maruts are said to have been created by Rudra from the udder of the cow *Pṛśni.* They exhibit the malificent trait of their father Rudra. Hence they are implored to ward off the lightning and man-slaying bolt from their worshippers and save them and their cows. When praised they confer beneficent results.

Rudra is fierce and destructive, like a terrible beast and is called a bull as well as the ruddy (Arusa) of heaven. He is usually regarded as malevolent. He is implored not to slay or injure in His anger, His worshippers and their belongings but to avert his great malignity and His cow-slaying, man-slaying bolt from them and to lay others low. He not only preserves from calamity but also bestows blessings. His healing powers are especially often mentioned; He has a thousand remedies and is the greatest physician of physicians.

Thus the deprecation of His wrath led to the application of the euphamistic epithet, Śiva, which became the regular name of Rudra, a historical successor in post-Vedic mythology (vide Macdonell—*Ibid* p. 53-54).

According to Zimmar, Gaṇeśa corresponds to Agni, Bṛhaspati, to 'Lord of Hosts' (i. e., of the Maruts, the breaths, the power of the soul) in the *Ṛgveda* and *Skanda* represents respectively the Sacradotium *(Brahman)* and Regnum *(Kṣatra),* the 'Hosts' being those of the commons (*Viśa*). Gaṇeśa's elephant's head corresponds to the elephantine glory *(Hasti Varcas)* and 'force' attributed to the sun and to Bṛhaspati in *Atharva Veda.* Thus Gaṇeśa is not as often stated a concept of popular origin but a hieratic origin (vide Zimmar on *Myths and Symbols in Indian art and Civilization*—Edited by Joseph Campbell p. 138).

There is no reference to Gaṇeśa in the early Vedic texts. But it is evident from the *Mānava Gṛhya Sūtra* (II. 14) that Vināyaka

(or *Vināyakas*) the earliest forms of Gaṇeśa had emerged as a malignant deity (or deities) before the Christian era. The *Gṛhya Sūtra* refers to four *Vināyakas* (viz., Śālakaṭaṅkaṭa, Kūṣmāṇḍarajaputra, Usmita and Devayajana) and gives an account of the rituals connected with their propitiation. The *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* (of sixth century) also refers to such rituals (I. 271 ff) sometimes in identical language. But the rituals appear here in a 'somewhat developed or complicated form'. But Yājñavalkya speaks of six names (viz., Mita, Sammita, Śāla, Kaṭaṅkaṭa, Kūṣmāṇḍa, Rajaputra) instead of four in the *Gṛhya Sūtras*. Yet they refer to one *Vināyaka* who has further been described as the son of Ambikā. The *Smṛti* refers to the appointment of Vināyaka as Gaṇapati (the leader of the *Gaṇas* which made Him Gaṇapati) by Rudra and Brahmā. The *Baudhāyana Gṛhya Sūtra* also refers to Gaṇapati. The *Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* refers to the *Gāyatrī Gaṇeśa* wherein He is referred to as *Vakratuṇḍa* and as *Dantin*. The *Gaṇapati Tāpanyupaniṣad* (a later *Upaniṣad*) proclaims Him as the eternal *Brahma*. In the *Atharva Śīrṣa Upaniṣad* He is identified with Rudra.

There is no mention of Gaṇapati as a distinct deity in either of the two great epics—the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. The reference to 'Gaṇeśa' and 'Gaṇeśvara' in the North Indian recension is to Śiva and this leads one to think that Śiva and Gaṇeśa were originally one and the same god.

Bhaṇḍārakara says that the significance of the common name Rudra is 'an evil spirit'. The name is later generalized but the signification is much better. The *Rudras* are called *Gaṇas* or tribes and Gaṇapati or leader of tribes, workmen, potters, cart-makers, carpenters and *Niṣādas* or men of the forest tribes. Thus when Rudra had his hosts of Maruts, who were called his *Gaṇas*, the leader of these *Gaṇas* was Gaṇapati. The name Rudra, was generalized and signified a number of spirits partaking of the character of the original Rudra and so was the name Gaṇapati generalized and meant many leaders of the *Gaṇas* or groups.

Another name, Vināyaka denoting a spirit also came into use. In the *AV* Rudra is identified with many gods or spirits and among these there is one called Vināyaka. In the *Mahābhārata Anuśāsana Parva* (51. 26) *Gaṇeśvaras* and *Vināyakas* are mentioned amongst the gods, who observe the actions of man and are present everywhere; and again (V. 57) *Vināyakas* are said to remove all evil from men when praised. *Gaṇeśvaras* or *Gaṇapatis* and *Vināyakas* are here represented, as the former are in the *Śatarudrīya* many in number and present everywhere (vide *Collected Works of Śrī R. G. Bhaṇḍārakara* Vol. IV. p. 210).

With the generalization of Gaṇapati and the introduction of various ceremonies there arose between the end of the 5th and the 8th century the cult called the Gaṇapati Cult.

R. C. Hāzrā, a research scholar who made some extensive research on *Purāṇas*, says that *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* which is an *Upa-Purāṇa* glorifying Gaṇeśa, is said to have been produced in the Banaras region at a comparatively later period. Hāzrā papers give an analysis of the *Purāṇa* (vide Journal of the Gaṅgānātha Jhā Research Institute, Allahabad, IX pp 77—79), cited in *Studies in Epics and Purāṇas of India* by A. D. Pusalkar p. 227. Hāzrā now continues in an article on Gaṇapati Worship and the *Upa-Purāṇas* dealing with it and says that originally regarded as malevolent demons putting obstacles to men's work, the four *Vināyakas* gradually were fused into one elephant-god who became a remover of obstacles also. Gaṇapati was included among the *Pañcāyatana* (five deities) at a later period and the *Gāṇapatya* sect came into being. No early Puranic work deals exclusively with the worship of Gaṇapati (vide Hāzrā's works *Ibid.* pp263—276, cited in *Epics and Purāṇas* by Pusalkar, *Ibid.*pp. 227).

Legend—

Once Gaṇeśa entered into a contest with His brother, Kārtikeya, in which they agreed that he who wins the race round the world and comes out first, would accept Siddhi and Buddhi—the two damsels. Kārtikeya started his journey on his peacock, but Gaṇeśa stood

stationary. He took round of His parents, Śiva and Pārvatī, and sat silent. When Kārtikeya returned, he found his brother Gaṇeśa remaining where He was before. Kārtikeya challenged Gaṇeśa. Gaṇeśa undeterred gave every detail of all the places round the world, as if He had actually seen them Himself. He had read books on science and so he knew every detail of the whole world and won the race. It is also sometimes said that His circumambulating His parents, who according to Him represent the whole world, they being the *Jagataḥ pitarauvande pārvatī parameśvarau*, as Kālidāsa would well describe is a holy and rewarding trip round the world. Gaṇeśa had encyclopaedic knowledge.

(2) Another legend shows that once Pārvatī invited Śani whose radiance would bring about immediate destruction, to have the vision of the new born baby. At the very sight of Śani, the head of the new-born babe, Gaṇeśa, was burnt. Viṣṇu immediately replaced it by placing the head of an elephant that was found on the river-bank at the time, on the shoulders of the babe.

(3) A third legend shows that once Pārvatī was taking an oil bath. She was naked. She had taken the oil and some secret substances with her. With this substance she created a body of a person with a fat belly. She sprinkled some Ganges water on that body and gave him a life, and then placed him at the entrance with a direction to him not to allow anyone an entry in the place, as she was naked. Śiva arrived there and wanted an entry to see Pārvatī. On being prevented by the new guard, Śiva got enraged and in the fury cut off the head of the guard and put on its place the head of an elephant, in which form he, the guard, is known today.

(4) And yet another legend shows that Gaṇèśa was appointed as the gate-keeper of Kailāsa. One day Paraśurāma arrived and wanted to see Śiva, but Gaṇeśa would not allow him entry, because Paraśurāma always behaved in a high-handed manner. Paraśurāma tried to enter by force. A scuffle ensued between them, in which Paraśurāma knocked out one of Gaṇeśa's tusks. Pārvatī who came

out, and seeing the appaling condition of her son, Gaṇapati, was about to curse Paraśurāma. The other gods intervened and pleased her not to start a war amongst the gods. Brahmā promised her that although Gaṇeśa is now having one tusk (and therefore known as *Ekadanta*), Gaṇeśa would be worshipped by all and even by the gods.

Gāṇapatya Sect—

By the time of the sixth century there arose a separate sect of Hindus called *Gāṇapatyas*, who were originally Shaivites. One of the *Upa-Purāṇas* called the *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* and the *Gaṇeśa Khaṇḍa* in the *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa* are supposed to have been written by the *Gāṇapatyas*. *Śaṅkara Vijaya* written by Ānanda Tīrtha mentions about them and says that they consist of six sects.

(1) Worshippers of Mahāgaṇapati—

These sects believe that the creator and the Mahāgaṇapati alone remain when Brahmā and others are destroyed at the time of the dissolution. Mahāgaṇapati having His peculiar face with one tusk and embraced by Śakti alone should be worshipped. One who meditates on this form repeating His *Mantra,* attains Supreme Bliss. He who expounds these doctrines to the *Ācārya* is given the name *Girijāsuta.*

(2) Worshippers called Gaṇapatikumāra—

These are adorers of Haridrāgaṇapati. They rely on *Ṛgveda* (II. 23. 1) as their text which they interpret to mean "we meditate on Thee who art the leader of the group of *Rudras,* Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Indra and others and art the instructor of sage Bhṛgu, Guru, Śeṣa and others; the highest of all who know the sciences, the greatest Lord of the *Brāhmaṇas,* engaged in the creation of the world i. e,, adored by Brahmā and others in the work of creation.

He is here worshipped and meditated upon as being dressed in a yellow silk garment, bearing a yellow sacred-thread, having four arms, three eyes and His face is suffused over by turmeric ointment and holding a noose, an elephant goad and a staff in His hands. The worshippers in this form are believed to attain liberation.

(3)Worshippers called Herambasuta—

This sect worships what is called Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇapati. The word Ucchiṣṭa is a compound word consisting of *Ut* and *Śiṣṭa* meaning the left-over. The residual is also a complete whole.

The followers of this sect follow the left-handed path (*Vāma Mārga*) which probably was set up in imitation of the *Kaula* worship of *Śakti*. The form of Gaṇapati meditated upon by them is very obscure. There is no distinction observed in marriage; promiscuous intercourse is allowed. They use wine. The followers have red mark on their forehead.

(4) The other three sects are—"Navanīta Gaṇeśa, Svarṇa Gaṇapati, and Santāna Gaṇapati". They worship according to *Śruti*. Since Gaṇapati is worshipped as chief of the gods, all others are treated as part of Him. They regard the whole world as Gaṇapati and adore Him as such.

According to Bhaṇḍārakara it is doubtful whether these sects ever existed at the time of Śaṅkarācārya. The imprinting of the face and the tooth of the god on the arms was a custom common to them with *Mādhva Vaiṣṇavas,* though it hardly indicates the period in which the sect arose. But the worship of Gaṇapati is practised by nearly all Hindus at the beginning of any religious ceremony and on special occasions. His images made of clay are worshipped with pomp and grandeur in Maharashtra on the fourth lunar day of the month of Bhādrapada (September) and at Chincawad near Pune there is a special establishment for the exclusive worship of this god (Bhaṇḍārakar *Ibid* p. 214).

Gaṇeśa's Popularity—

Gaṇeśa is a popular deity, whose popularity has crossed the boundaries of India and reached as far West as America and up to Java and other places in the East. Shaivites worship Him as the debonair son of Śiva and the supreme goddess Pārvatī and captain of the dainty suite. He is known as *Maṅgala Mūrti*—the auspicious deity and so He is worshipped to bring about 'auspiciousness' by removing all obstructions that may intercept between desire and

fulfilment. Every man loves peace and this is believed to be brought about by removing the obstructions on the way.

His long-trunked, pot-bellied statue can be seen in almost all towns. Similar statues from early middle ages can be seen as far away as Java in the East. Many place offerings near His statue, before setting off on a journey or at the opening of a new business or enterprise or on wedding. He is the god of practical wisdom and the remover of the obstacles. He is the Lord of the scribes. He has an elephant's head. "The most probable explanation (for this) is that in the most ancient times of human history when the gods were still theriomorphic (when Apollo was still a wolf, Athena an owl, Diana a bear and Zeus a bull) Gaṇeśa was an elephant just as Hanuman the monkey now represented as a man with a monkey head. The peoples of antiquity in India and also in Africa regarded elephant as the wisest of all animals because the elephant lives longest. The elephant image, size, demonstrates his noble birth; he is by right the king of the jungle. He knows its secret as he was not born yesterday. He is the "Indian counterpart of Hermes breaker of the way and the guide of the soul" (vide Zimmar*On Philosophies of India* p. 568).

The Tantric principles by which sun, Gaṇeśa, Śakti, Śiva and Viṣṇu are worshipped, are applied to the worship of Mahāyāna Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas; the *Yab-Yum* symbolism is Tantric (*Ibid*).

"In the sculpture in the great Mexican temple at Copan, this god is depicted as holding in His hand the smoking bowl of rice not as the man Siddhārtha, Gautama, but as the elephant-headed cloud-god Gaṇeśa who entered His mother's womb when the sun-physician was conceived. In this portrait as the cloud-bird whose tail protruding from back of his head, He is seated in two united *Svastika* representing the sun going northwards at the winter solistice and the male *Svastika* denoting the southern path of the sun after summer solistice.

The god of the elephant's trunk is also frequently depicted in

Mexican manuscripts and in the temple ruins in Central America as the god with a proboscis-like horn when water is pouring and his head is most frequently portrayed on the corners of the temple walls, which are always built with reference of the cardinal points" (*Pearls of Truth* p. 599).

Aśoka's daughter Cārumatī popularized the worship of Gaṇeśa in Nepal. And today one of the important Gaṇapati images in Nepal is referred to as Aśoka Vināyaka.

Various Forms and Images of Gaṇapati—

There are various forms of Gaṇapati described in the texts. They are—*Sthānaka Mūrti* (in a standing posture); *Āsīna Mūrti* (in a sitting posture); *Nṛtta Mūrti* (in a dancing form); *Yānaka Mūrti* (in a riding form), *Devī Sahita Mūrti* (Geṇeśa with Devī).

Sthānaka Mūrti—

In this posture Gaṇapati is in a standing pose. One of the popular images of Gaṇapati is *Prasanna Gaṇapati* described as standing with a few bends or perfectly erect. One authority says that the figure should stand in *Samabhaṅga*. The bends are generally three; He carries with Him the instruments *Pāśa* and *Aṅkuśa* in His upper hands while the other two hands are in *Varada* and *Abhaya* poses.

In another variety of Haridrā Gaṇapati or Rātri Gaṇapati, He is shown with four hands and three eyes; He holds in hands *Pāśa, Aṅkuśa, Modaka* and *Danta*.

Even in these, there seems to be various other changes in the Gaṇapati images in various temples.

Āsīna Mūrti—

Gaṇapati in a sitting posture: Gaṇapati sitting, holds *Pāśa* in His upper right hand and in His upper left hand He holds *Aṅkuśa*; broken tusk in His lower right hand and *Modaka* in the lower left hand. He wears *Yajñopavīta* (the sacred thread). The mouse appears on the pedestal below His feet.

In some forms the god is holding *Paraśu* in the upper right hand, *Pāśa* in the upper left hand, broken tusk in the lower right hand and the lower left hand is placed on a heap of sweets.

Nṛtta Mūrti (Dancing form)—

Here the Gaṇeśa has eight hands in which He holds *Pāśa, Aṅkuśa,* cakes, *Kūṭhāra* (an axe), *Danta, Valaya* (a quoit) and an *Aṅgulīya* (a ring), the remaining hands should be freely hanging as to become helpful for movements while in dance. The left leg should be slightly bent, resting on the *Padmāsana* and the right leg also bent and held up in the air.

Yānaka Mūrti (Riding form)—

Gaṇapati in this form has ten hands and holds *Aṅkuśa,* arrow and tusk in the upper right hands and *Paraśu* and bow in the upper left hands. In the lower right hand He holds in *Abhaya* posture and in another right hand He holds *Modaka.* The tip of the trunk rests on the *Modaka.*

Devī Sahita Mūrti (Forms with Devi)—

These are various forms of Gaṇapati in this posture.

(1) Lakṣmī Gaṇapati—

Gaṇapati in this form has eight hands; He carries in them parrot, pomegranate, lotus, water vessel of gold set with rubies, *Aṅkuśa, Pāśa, Kalpaka Latā* and bud of the plant called *Bāṇa.* Water is shown as pouring out of the proboscis. This is the description in *Kriyākramadyotinī* by Aghorasevācārya.

In *Mantramahodadhi* the god has three eyes; He holds in His two hands *Danta* and *Cakra*. The other hand is in *Abhaya* pose. The fourth hand is intended to hold Lakṣmī in embrace. Lakṣmī is sculptured as to be embracing the god. She holds lotus in another hand.

Here also there are various minor alterations.

(2) Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇapati —

The deity carries in His hands lotus flower, pomegranate, *Vīṇā*, some quantity of paddy, and *Akṣamāḷā*. According to *Mantramahārṇava* He should carry *Bāṇas, Dhanuṣa, Pāśa* and *Aṅkuśa.* He should be seated on *Padmāsana* with a nude *Devī*, in a posture making attempts for coition.

The *Uttara Kāmikāgama* gives the following description—

"The deity is seated and has four hands. In three of His hands He carries *Pāśa, Aṅkuśa,* and a piece of sugar-cane. The fourth hand He holds touching the private parts of the naked figure of the *Devī*. He has three eyes and wears on the head a *Ratna Mukuṭa* (crown). The nude *Devī* should be sitting on His lap and be decked with jewels and has only two hands. The name of the goddess is Vighneśvarī.

The Gaṇapati riding a lion has five elephant heads, four facing cardinal points and the fifth above those looking upwards.

Miscellaneous—

In one form Gaṇapati stands along with the *Navagrahas* and *Saptamātṛkās*.

Śilpa Sāra mentions thirty types of Gaṇapati images.

In North India the earliest Gaṇapati image belongs to the Gupta period. An image said to be of the 5th century A. D. found at Bhumara, is ascribed to the Gupta period. Images from Bhumara, Udayagiri, Deogarh, Vijayavada, Madugala come under the category of the images without the *Kirīṭa*.

The Pallava, Cola, Kalyāṇī, Cālukya, Hoysala, Kākaṭīya and Vijayanagar examples of Gaṇapati are shown with *Kirīṭa* and having four hands.

Aśoka's daughter Cārumatī popularized the worship of Gaṇeśa in Nepal. And today one of the important Gaṇapati images in Nepal is known as Aśoka's Vināyaka.

Philosophical significance of Gaṇapati—

In Hindu theology, every image of God, is only a symbolic representation of the Supreme Being, who is pure non-dual, consciousness. The masters of *Tantra* have for purposes of worship given physical features, accessories, weapons, decorations etc. *Bhāgavata* (XII. 11. 2) states the principles of symbolism thus—

तान्त्रिकाः परिचर्यायां केवलस्य श्रियः पतेः।
अंगोपाङ्गायुधाकल्पं कल्पयन्ति यथा च यैः॥

Śaunaka asks why is the Lord, who is pure-consciousness, worshipped as a form having limbs, servants and even weapons ?

Sūta answers that these are meditated upon as mere symbols of virtues and principles in His manifestation.

For example the yellow cloth represents the *Vedas* and the sacred thread as *Om* with its three syllables.

In the *Purāṇas*, under various epithets, only one god is eulogised, such as Śiva, Gaṇapati, Devī, Sūrya, Viṣṇu etc. While the devotee offers his prayers to Him under one particular name and form, he contemplates that name and form as Supreme and the rest as subservient thereto. In other words when one worships Śiva as the Supreme Being, Gaṇapati, Devī, Sūrya, Viṣṇu and others become only as His *Vibhūtis*. Those who worship Gaṇapati, regard Devī, Sūrya, Viṣṇu and Śiva as only subservient to Him. The fundamental principle is that the devotee should find one in the many and the many in the one. Forms are given to the formless only for the sake of meditation.

In the *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa* it is stated—

बीजं संसारवृक्षाणामनुकारं च तदाश्रयम्।
स्त्रीपुंनपुंसकानां च रूपमेतदतीन्द्रियम्।।
सर्वाद्यमग्रपूज्यं च सर्वपूज्यं गुणार्णवम्।
स्वेच्छया सगुणं चैव निर्गुणं चापि स्वेच्छया।।
आविर्भावस्तिरोभावः स्वेच्छयास्य च मायया।
नित्योऽयमेकदन्तश्च कवचं चास्य वत्सक।।

Śrī Gaṇeśa is the source of this creation and the subsequent development thereof. Beyond the ken of all humanity, is His form which is primal in existence, foremost to be worshipped, adored by all and full of auspicious qualities. He is both *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa* by His own sweet will. Though Lord Gaṇeśa is eternal, yet He appears and disappears at will by His own power.

It is to be remembered that the Indian theologians consider it proper to adore the divine in any form a particular cult upholds provided there is the basic understanding that the deity is an expression of the universal being, the *Sat-Cit-Ānanda* of the *Upaniṣads*.

God has special name though He has several other subsidiary

names as well. He has also a special divine Form which is not a manifestation of a formless consciousness or a temporarily assumed one to favour a worshipper but an ultimate fact. It is one with His unique and inherent nature (*Svarūpa*). There is nothing anthropomorphic about it though the description may convey that idea. To counteract this misapprehension the excellencies of the divine Form are given in infinite multiples of anything human (vide *The Bhakti School of Vedānta* by Swāmī Tapasyānanda p. 70). Perhaps when the divinity that is formless assumes a Form He accedes to the formula $E=mc^2$ and when He transcends the Form, that is both energy and matter, He remains in a super-integrated state and thus becomes formless.

Gaṇeśa, the son of Śiva, His father (who rides a bull), and Pārvatī, His mother (who rides on a lion), is the Lord and the leader of the hosts who rides on a rat. Gaṇeśa forges ahead through obstacles as an elephant through the jungle, but rat too is an overcomer of obstacles and as such an appropriate even though physically incongruous mount for the gigantic pot-bellied divinity of the elephant-head. The elephant passes through the wilderness treading shrubs, bending and uprooting trees, fording rivers and lakes easily; the rat can gain access to the bolted granary. The two represent the power of the god to vanquish every obstacle on the way (Zimmar). The Lord of the obstacles (*Vighna-Iśvara*) breaks a pathway for the devotee. In the left hand He carries a bowl of rice with which He feeds or of jewels and corals and pearls which He showers on His devotees "Paunchy and well off, He is the bestower of earthly prosperity and well-being. He is therefore, invoked at the outset of undertakings of every kind."

The Gaṇeśa image is one of the many that possess many curious features that Hindu mythology and iconography have conceived. With a plump body, a round belly, this god with an elephant head (it is not certain when this god acquired an elephant head) and a trunk has selected a petty mouse as His *Vāhana*. The *Aṅkuśa*, *Śaṅkha*, and *Pāśa* are some of His *Āyudhas*. However most of the

images from the important Gaṇeśa temples are of crude nature and are known as *Svayaṁbhū* or self-born. They do not have elaborate carvings necessary to indicate the *Āyudhas* (vide *Temples and Legends of Maharashtra* by M. S. Mate p. 1).

The device of the deity possessing many arms was developed in the medieval period and it has immensely enriched the possibilities of iconographic communication.

In philosophy Gaṇeśa represents the unity of man, the individual, the microcosm with the universe—the macrocosm which is symbolized by the elephant, the king of the animal world. Devout Hindus believe and pray Gaṇeśa that He may intervene on their behalf with the redoubtful Śiva and Pārvatī, His parents.

Gaṇeśa is also known as Siddhi Vināyaka, the one who is a possessor of mystic powers and the bestower of boons; and even wisdom.

The message of the symbolic figure of Gaṇeśa is "Invoke first the life-elevating energy in you in all your endeavours and you will be victorious in your life's fulfilment with the help of wisdom you may acquire by opening the doors of the cavern of the unconscious."

How can it be possible for a human being who is a prisoner to his brain (marvellous instrument of magic) consort with gods without some kind of change in his brain and in his perceptions, mental, intellectual etc. Devotion true, when it is sincere brings out a change in the brain that results in a feeling of getting over the obstacles on his way and a sense of fulfilment which he believes to have been brought about by a higher power or a higher consciousness, that is God; and Gaṇeśa is that God which the devotees have accepted as the possessor of the highest consciousness. *Dhyāna* or meditation gives a mystical vision and the mental endowment to the illuminate. The ego and the vanity in him which are the real obstructors and which stand in the way of acceptance of the position that the super-ordinary consciousness to which he is a stranger, can be possible of acquiring. In persons deep in the religious life the door into the subliminal region (the abode of everything that is

latent and the reservoir of everything that passes unrecorded or unobserved) seems unusually wide open; at any rate their experience making their entrance through that possible, gives them an emphatic influence in shaping their lives. (*The wonder of the Brain* by Gopī Kṛṣṇa pp. 60-61). Religion and religious experience come from the unconscious. The cart-load of fears, sorrows and sins do not rumble out of the cavern of the unconsciousness but are only the symbols of the torment that is reserved for the rebellious man for partaking of the forbidden fruit.

When the distressed man, full with his woes, sorrows and fears, out of his sincere devotion entrusts them all to another in whom he has absolute confidence or belief (especially a deity like Gaṇeśa, the god that removes the obstructions and brings prosperity), feels a sense of relief and a sense of overcoming the woes and fears. This he thinks to have been brought about by the intervention of that other. This perhaps may be the true nature of devotional life. Instances are replete with such circumstances when the Lord worshipped by the devotee taking care of the devotee even without the devotee's knowledge. The devotee of Gaṇeśa believes Him to be the possesssor of the spiritual power that transforms man and his destiny.

वैराग्यनाशबीजञ्च शश्वद्रागविवर्द्धनम्।
पत्तनं साहसानाञ्च दोषाणामालयं सदा॥
अप्रत्ययानां क्षेत्रञ्च स्वयं कपटमूर्तिमत्।
अहङ्काराश्रयं शश्वद्विषकुम्भं सुधामुखम्॥

"Faminine beauty is the seed for destruction of dispassion. It always enhances the desire and attraction to the luxury. It is stronghold of rashness and always a storehouse of vices. It is a fertiled field for disbelief and is embodied duplicity, a base for egoistic feelings and is like a jar full of poison but outwardly appearing like nectar."

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (VI. 58-59)

A Devotee (Bhruśuṇḍī)

Long long ago, in the remote past there was a town named Nandura in the vicinity of Daṇḍakāraṇya. There lived a man Nāmā by name and *Kevaṭa* by caste. Nāmā was illiterate. As a result of the evil acts done in the previous births and due to the evil society he developed into a very crooked and cruel man. The sense of compassion was quite a strange and unexperienced thing. Right from his early childhood he was habituated of thieving. As he grew up into maturity, his evil propensities went on multiplying day by day. By the time he was mature, he had been a notorious thief, a drinker and meat-eater. He was indulging himself in kidnapping the other peoples' wives and looting the wealth of others. He was converted into a beast without touch of mercy. If anybody tried to oppose him or stop him from doing what he wanted to do, his life suddenly became unsafe and insecure. So everybody tried to avoid him and keep himself away from that notorious killer. He tried to get confidence of others by taking false oath but after coming into confidence, killing him unscrupulously was just a pastime with him. He used to kill even innocent persons to fulfil the smallest of his self-interest. Due to the cruelty of the beastly Nāmā, everybody was always terrified. When this crossed the limit, the inhabitants of Nandura jointly exiled Nāmā and pushed him away from the town. Now for Nāmā there was no other way left except to take refuge to the forest. He did the same and he took all his property and got settled in the nearby forest. He stored necessary weapons to carry out his demoniacal errands. He had a bow and arrows, a sword and noose and other things like that. Now there was nobody to disturb him.

He looted the wayfarers whosoever passed through that forest. He committed a number of murders in order to pile up his wealth. Equipped with his weapons he became a source of terror to the people. Even though he had plenty of money, clothings and ornaments, his thirst for hoarding did not get quenched. On the contrary it increased more and more. He mercilessly went on killing human beings. Even dumb and helpless animals could not escape and he felt a devilish joy in killing the animals.

One day he went for hunting, killed a number of animals and enjoyed the sufferings of the poor creatures. This way he covered a distance of eight to ten miles. Suddenly he faltered as one of his legs was inadvertently slipped in a ditch. His leg got strained. Nāmā moaned. Somehow he managed to walk limpingly and reached near Gaṇeśa Tīrtha. In order to remove his fatigue he took bath in *Gaṇeśa Kuṇḍa* and drank a few draughts of water. After taking rest a while he started for home. On the way he happened to see the great sage Mudgala. Mudgala was a great devotee of Lord Gaṇeśa and at that time he was meditating upon and remembering Lord Gaṇeśa. For sometime Nāmā forgot all his bodily pain and rushed towards the sage with an intention to kill him. But as soon as he went close to him, his arm was as if paralysed and at the same time his weapons fell down on earth for no apparent reason. Not only this but there was some sudden inner change in him as soon as he saw Mudgala. All his evil propensities calmed down and his wickedness disappeared. Noticing this suddenly unexpected change in his mind Nāmā was rather shocked. At the same time *Maharṣi* Mudgala asked him with a smiling face—"O, how is it that your weapons fell down on earth?" Nāmā who was transformed into a state of dispassion by having the vision of the matchless devotee of Lord Gaṇeśa and a great renouncer, most humbly replied— "O adorable great soul, I myself am amazed. I took bath in this *Gaṇeśa Kuṇḍa* and then had your vision which is difficult to get. The very moment I saw you, all my evil tendencies evaporated. Suddenly I got fed up with the worldly wealth and luxury. I think the knowledge dawned

in me and I am experiencing the wonderful peace." Repenting this way with a purified heart Nāmā spoke in a voice full of faith and admiration to the *Ṛṣi*—"O great sage, the embodied compassion, I am wicked and sinner as nobody else could be. It is impossible to count my sins and they are limitless. Right from the birth I have been doing only wrong things, unethical, unsocial, coercion, rape and killing etc., but undoubtedly I am fortunate also. Just as somebody who is in search of some cheap metal suddenly happens to get a heap of precious gems, similarly a greedy and wicked person like me got the *Darśana* of a great sage like you. It is your influence that caused my weapons to fall automatically down on the earth and now onwards in the rest of my life these weapons will never be allowed to touch my body. O kind one, I have come to the refuge of your feet. The saintly persons by nature, show compassion to the sinners. You please be kind on a sinner like me. Please do rescue me from this. The tears were oozing out from his eyes. He prostrated himself at the feet of *Ṛṣi*. He went on requesting repeatedly—"O Lord, liberate me." The saviour of refugees the *Muni* said with a melted heart—"According to the scriptures you have no right to perform virtuous actions like charity. You make *Japa* of the name of Lord Gajānana to propitiate that God who is the bestower of all accomplishments and who is auspicious.

Nāmā placed his head at the feet of the *Ṛṣi*. The great *Muni* affectionately caressing him and moving his hands on the head of Nāmā, gave him *Nāma Mantra* of Gajānana which is capable of providing every success— 'गणेशाय नमः'. Saying so the great *Muni* planted a piece of wood there and said to Nāmā—"Sit here. In one posture without eating anything at all, repeat this *Nāma Mantra* with the concentration of mind. Every morning and evening pour some water at the root of this wooden piece. This way continue the *Nāma Japa* till I come back and till the new sprouts appear in this wood. The *Muni* Mudgala went away.

Decidedly the sun of his fortune had arisen. With firm determination giving up the affection of wife or children and giving

up all mundane desires completely, he went on practising. As instructed by his preceptor he sat there before that wooden log in one pose, having his senses under complete control, he was making *Japa* with great love and devotion. He had only wind for his food. At both the times he never forgot to irrigate that log.

A wonderful control over senses! A wonderful faith and a matchless devotion! Nāmā went on and on making *Japa* of the name. One thousand years passed. The log was sprouted, gradually it was full of green leaves and creepers. The skeleton of Nāmā covered by skin only, was converted into an ant-hill. The compassionate *Muni* Mudgala also arrived. He was extremely satisfied to see the severe penance of Nāmā. He took some water on his palm and reciting some *Mantra* infused some spiritual power in it and sprinkled over what was only remains of Nāmā. Lo ! The skeleton of that ascetic Nāmā, all of a sudden was converted into a divine form and divine splendour. He did attain the resemblance of Gaṇeśa. Quiet oblivious of what was happening Nāmā was repeating and repeating the name of the Lord meditating upon Him with closed eyes. He opened his eyes only when the *Muni* Mudgala made some effort to awaken him. An unbearable flame was coming out of the eyes of the great ascetic which was burning all the three worlds. Mudgala somehow stopped the annihilation of the universe.

Nāmā was blessed to see his preceptor who was to him another form of Gajānana. He prostrated at his feet and washed them with his tears of faith and admiration. The *Muni* embraced him just like a son. A trunk developed between the eyebrows of Nāmā. So the great *Muni* affectionately named his son as Bhruśuṇḍī.

Then *Maharṣi* taught Bhruśuṇḍī one lettered *Gaṇeśa Mantra* and granting him some boons he said—"You are a great *Ṛṣi.* The gods, *Siddhas* and *Gandharvas* will also adore you. Just as the sins are destroyed by meditating upon the Lord Gajānana and by His vision similarly you are also like Him. Be famous by the name of Bhruśuṇḍī. Whosoever will have your *Darśana*, will be blessed and I grant you a long life of one lakh *Kalpas*.

Imagery of Gaṇapati

—*M. Ravi Chandran*

One of the many glories of Hinduism consists in the tremendously wide variety of divine manifestations that it has conceived down the long corridors of time since the dawn of history. The Hindu pantheon is rich with various deities, all of them are manifestations of the same divine *Brahma,* and all powerful pathways to salvation.

Gaṇapati as Catastrophe—

From being literally a trouble-maker, Gaṇapati became the Custodian of good-will and success. He was conceived as the deity who bestowed success. But this is an obviously late idea being superimposed on an older one, and the older one viewed Gaṇapati as Catastrophe incarnate. It is traceable as far back as the fifth century B. C., that is the date usually assigned to the *Gṛhya Sūtras.* And this attitude to Gaṇapati must have persisted for a long time. The law book ascribed to Gaṇapati by Yājñavalkya, separated by many centuries from the *Mānava Gṛhya Sūtra,* echoed it.

Yājñavalkya began by saying that the Vināyaka was appointed by Rudra and Brahmā to the leadership of the *Gaṇas* (*gaṇānāṁ adhipataye*) to create obstacles. It is from the point of view of this early attitude as expressed in the legal or quasi-legal literatures, that certain well-known names of Gaṇapati can possibly be clearly understood. These names are Vighnakṛt, Vighneśa, Vighnarāja, Vighneśvara, etc., meaning, literally, the trouble maker. However, under the influence of later ideas, the literal meaning of these names is often ignored and the modern scholars are generally inclined to view these as meaning the deity who, by presiding over

troubles, helps human beings to overcome these and attain success. As Monier Williams (*Saṁskṛta English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1899, p.343) said—"Though Gaṇeśa causes obstacles, he also removes them; hence he is invoked at the commencement of all undertakings and at the opening of all compositions with the words *'namo Gaṇeśāya vighneśvarāya'*, that is, I bow down before Gaṇeśa, the lord of obstacles."

Images of Gaṇapati—

The Gaṇapati icon has developed a very rich imagery from the time when it was first fashioned and developed, until today. With the adoption of Gaṇapati as a powerful deity in the Hindu pantheon, a very rich imagery developed around his icon, despite the fact that the elephant head, ears and trunk are common features not subject to change.

Starting with his postures, Gaṇapati is most often shown in a seated pose, sometimes as a standing figure, and, in the form of *Nṛtya Gaṇapati*, as a dancing figure. If it is in a standing pose, the body is sometimes erect but more often in the *Dvibhaṅga* (two bends) or *Tribhaṅga* (three bends) postures.

In the seated posture, normally the left leg is folded and the right hangs down to the floor level. Sometimes, as in the form of *Yoga Gaṇapati,* the legs are crossed in the lotus position with the right foot placed on the left thigh. However the big belly makes such a posture difficult, so that the first position (with one leg dangling) is more common. As for his seat, he is shown seated or standing on a throne-like seat, on a carved plank, or on a lotus. He is also shown on his mouse, on a lion or, in a rare case, as the Tantric *Mūlādhāra Gaṇapati,* on a multi-headed snake.

Gaṇapati is shown with two eyes and, in some forms with three eyes. The trunk is usually turned to the left and in rare figures to the right. In the latter case, he is known as *Valamburi Vināyaka* in Tamil and is considered very auspicious. With a left-turned trunk he is known as *Idamburi Vināyaka.* Sometimes he holds a *Modaka* (sweet ball), a *Ratna Kumbha* (pot of jewels), a pomegranate, a

Kamaṇḍalu (prayer vessel), or an *Amṛta Kumbha* (pot of nectar) in his trunk (so the trunk is called his fifth hand).

Normally Gaṇapati is shown with four arms. However, he may also be shown with two, six, eight, ten or even sixteen arms, depending on his attributes in the particular role being played.

His unique feature, besides the elephant head, is the large belly practically falling over his lower garment. On his chest, across his left shoulder, is his sacred thread, often in the form of a snake. Around his abdomen, also a girdle or belt, is a snake. In his hands, Gaṇapati holds several articles depending on the role he plays and the attributes in each particular incarnation.

Gaṇapati is considered as a *Brahmacārī* (celebate) in most parts of the country. In some areas, *Siddhi* (achievement) and *Buddhi* (wisdom) are his symbolic consorts.

However the Tantric religion has a different story to tell as in Tantricism, sex is an integral part of worship. Gaṇapati is therefore shown in Tantric icons with one spouse who is his *Śakti* or power whom he fondles. Although Hinduism absorbed the Tantric form of Gaṇapati, such icons are not normally used for worship but are seen as decorative sculptures on temple walls and pillars.

Gaṇapati shrines—

In India, every village has a shrine and towns and cities abound with Gaṇapati temples and sculptures. It is impossible to list them. Also, each one has its own *Itihāsa,* history and legends, and each temple has an image conforming to the local legend. In Maharashtra, the worship of Gaṇapati has led to a rich imagery. Of these the most important to Gaṇapati devotees are the eight Gaṇapati shrines, *Aṣṭa Vināyaka.* These eight forms of *Gaṇapatis* are *Svayambhū* (self-born). These images are large single pieces of stone (monoliths) in which there are traces of an elephant head and a trunk. These eight shrines are located in Maharashtra.

(1) Mayūreśvara or Moreśvara—

This shrine is at Morgaon, south-east of Pune, where Gaṇapati, riding a peacock and taking the form of Mayūreśvara or Moreśvara,

is believed to have destroyed the demon, Sindhu.

(2) Cintāmaṇi Gaṇapati—

This shrine is at Theur, close to Pune. In this, Gaṇapati is believed to have got back the precious jewel *Cintāmaṇi* from the greedy *Gaṇa* for sage Kapila at this spot.

(3) Mahāgaṇapati—

This shrine is at Ranjangaon. The legend here refers to Śiva worshipping Gaṇapati before fighting the demon, Tripurāsura.

(4) Siddhivināyaka—

This is at Siddhateka. According to legend, Lord Viṣṇu was reminded to pray to Gaṇapati before the fight with the demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha. By doing so, he achieved success or *Siddhi*. This icon has a right-turned trunk.

(5) Vighnahara or Vighneśvara—

This shrine is at Ojhar. This form was taken by Gaṇapati to destroy a demon named Vighnāsura who was created by Indra.

(6) Girijātmaka or Girijātmaja—

This shrine is at Lenyadri. It is believed that Goddess Pārvatī performed penance here to beget Gaṇapati as her son.

(7) Ballāleśvara—

This shrine is at Pali near the Bombay-Goa road. Here Gaṇapati saved his devotee, a boy, Ballāla, who was beaten up by villagers for his single-minded worship of Vināyaka.

(8) Varada Vināyaka—

This shrine is at Mahad, near Khopoli. Here, a lamp, *Nanda Dīpa* is kept permanently lighted and has been shining since 1892.

Thirty-two Forms of Gaṇapati—

The main characteristics of the thirty-two forms are taken from the *Dhyāna Ślokas* (Śakuntalā Jagannāthan and Nanditā Kṛṣṇa, *Gaṇeśa,* Bombay 1992).

(1) Bāla Gaṇapati (the beloved child)—

In this form the elephant-faced child is depicted with four arms and is in the colour of the rays of the rising sun. He holds a banana, mango, jackfruit, and sugar-cane in his hands and his favourite

sweet, the *Modaka,* in his trunk.

(2) Taruṇa Gaṇapati (the youthful Gaṇeśa)—

In this form, the young Gaṇapati is shown as being red in colour like the noon-day sun. In his hands he holds a noose, an elephant goad, *Modaka* sweet, wood-apple, rose-apple, his broken tusk, a sprig of paddy and a sugar-cane branch.

(3) Bhakti Gaṇapati (the god of devotees)—

In this form, depicted as being of the colour of the full moon of autumn, in his hands he holds a coconut, mango, banana, and a cup of *Khīra* (milk-sweet).

(4) Vīra Gaṇapati (the valiant warrior)—

In this form, Gaṇapati is shown with a red complexion, eight pairs of arms and a stern look. In his hands he holds a goblin, spear, bow, arrow, *Cakra* (discus), sword, shield, large hammer, *Gadā* (mace), goad, noose, pick-axe, battle-axe, trident, serpent and banner.

(5) Śakti Gaṇapati (the powerful one)—

In this form, holding in one arm the green-coloured *Śakti* (power personified in female form) *Śakti Gaṇapati* is depicted as being the colour of the sky at sunset. He holds a noose, a garland of flowers and one hand in the *Abhaya Mudrā* offering blessings to his devotees.

(6) Dwija Gaṇapati (the twice-born)—

In this form, four-headed, like Brahmā, he holds a book, rosary beads, *Kamaṇḍalu* (prayer vessel), and a *Daṇḍa* (staff). He is in the colour of the moon and wears lightning like bangles on his arms.

(7) Siddhi Gaṇapati (God of achievement)—

In this form, of the colour of golden yellow, he holds a mango fruit, stick of sugar-cane, a bunch of flowers and an axe. In his trunk, the fifth hand, he holds a sweetened ball of sesame seeds.

(8) Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇapati (a Tantric deity)—

In this form, holding *Śakti* (his female power) in one arm, in his other hands he holds a blue lotus, pomegranate, a sprig of paddy, *Vīṇā* (musical instrument) and rosary beads. He is depicted

as being blue in colour.

(9) Vighna Gaṇapati (creator of obstacles for the evil)—

In this form, of golden hue, he is eight-armed and holds, like Lord Viṣṇu, a *Śaṅkha* (conch) and *Cakra* (discus). He also holds a bunch of flowers, sugar-cane bow, flower arrow, axe, noose and garland.

(10) Kṣipra Gaṇapati (quick-acting God)—

In this form, handsome of appearance and red in colour like the hibiscus flower, he holds his broken tusk, noose, goad, and a sprig of the *Kalpavṛkṣa* (wish fulfilling tree) in his hands and *Ratnakumbha* (a pot of precious gems) in his trunk.

(11) Heramba Gaṇapati (the protector of the weak)—

In this form with five faces and of dark green colour, he rides a lion, two of his hands are in the *Abhaya* (protective) and *Varada* (boon giving) postures. In his other hands, he holds a noose, tusk, rosary beads, garland, axe, big hammer, *Modaka* sweet and fruit.

(12) Lakṣmī Gaṇapati (the giver of success)—

In this form, the Goddesses, Siddhi (achievement) and Buddhi (wisdom) in either lap hold blue lotuses in their hands. His one hand is in the *Varada* (boon giving) posture, and in his other hands he has a noose, goad, parrot, a sprig of the *Kalpavṛkṣa*, *Kamaṇḍalu*, sword and pomegranate. He is depicted in pure white colour.

(13) Mahā Gaṇapati (the great one)—

In this form, with a complexion like ripe paddy, he holds his *Śakti*, who has a lotus in her hand, on his lap. He has three eyes and the crescent moon on his crown. He holds a pomegranate, *Gadā* (mace), sugar-cane bow, *Cakra* (discus), lotus, noose, blue lily, sprig of paddy, tusk and pot of gems.

(14) Vijaya Gaṇapati (the giver of success)—

In this form, of red complexion and riding a rodent he holds a goad, noose, tusk and mango in his hands.

(15) Nṛtya Gaṇapati (the happy dancer)—

In this form, of golden colour, Gaṇapati dances under the *Kalpavṛkṣa*. He wears rings on his fingers and holds a noose, goad,

axe, tusk and sometimes a sweet cake in one of his hands.

(16) Ūrdhva Gaṇapati (the Tantric God)—

In this form, holding a green-complexioned goddess, in other hands he holds a blue lotus, sprig of paddy, flower, sugar-cane bow, arrow and tusk. He is of golden colour.

(17) Ekākṣara Gaṇapati (of the single letter)—

In this form, red in colour, clad in red silk, wearing a garland of red flowers and with the crescent moon on his crown, he is three-eyed with short arms and legs. He carries a pomegranate, noose and goad in his hands. His fourth hand is in the *Varada* (wish-fulfilling) pose. He sits in *Padmāsana* (Yogic lotus pose) and rides the mouse.

(18) Varada Gaṇapati (the giver of boons)—

In this form of red complexion, he has three eyes and wears the crescent moon on his head. He holds the noose, goad, a dish of honey in his hands, and a pot of jewels in his trunk.

(19) Tryakṣara Gaṇapati (of the three letters Aum)—

In this form, of golden colour, he has fly whisks in his flapping ears. He holds a noose, goad, tusk and mango fruit in his hands and a *Modaka* sweet in his trunk.

(20) Kṣipra Prasāda Gaṇapati (one who rewards promptly)—

In this form, adorned with ornaments and seated on a throne of *Kuśa* grass, he holds a noose, goad, lotus, pomegranate, tusk and a sprig of the *Kalpavṛkṣa.*

(21) Haridrā Gaṇapati (the golden one)—

In this form, yellow in colour with bright yellow raiments, he holds a noose, goad, tusk and *Modaka* sweet in his hands.

(22) Ekadanta Gaṇapati (of the single tusk)—

In this form, blue in colour and with a huge abdomen, he holds in his hands an axe, rosary beads, *Laḍḍū* (sweet) and his broken tusk.

(23) Sṛṣṭi Gaṇapati (the creator)—

In this form, riding a large rodent and of red complexion, he holds in his hands a noose, goad, tusk and mango.

(24) Uddaṇḍa Gaṇapati (the punisher of evil)—

In this form, in his ten hands he holds a pot of gems, lotus, blue

water lily, *Gadā* (mace), sugar-cane, sprig of paddy, noose, garland, pomegranate and tusk. This Tantric deity carries on his lap his *Śakti* (power) a green coloured female holding a lotus in her hand.

(25) Ṛṇamocana Gaṇapati (the one who releases human from bondage)—

In this form, of white crystal-like mien, he is clad in red silk garments. He holds a goad, noose, rose apple and his tusk in his hands.

(26) Ḍhuṇḍhi Gaṇapati of Kashi—

In this form, often of Sindūra or red colour, he has prayer beads, his tusk, a *Ratnakumbha* (pot of gems) and an axe in his hands.

(27) Dwimukha Gaṇapati (the god of two faces)—

In this form, bluish-green in colour, wearing a red silk garment and a gem studded crown, he holds in his four hands, a noose, goad, tusk and a pot of gems.

(28) Trimukha Gaṇapati (the three-faced deity)—

In this form, seated in the middle of a golden lotus seat with a complexion as red as the *Palāśa* flower, he holds a sharp goad, prayer beads, noose and pot of nectar. He is shown with the left hand in an *Abhaya* (protective) pose and the right in the *Varada* (reward-giving pose) pose.

(29) Siṁha Gaṇapati (the one riding a lion)—

In this form, with the lion as his vehicle, He is white in colour and also holds a lion in one hand. In his other hands are a sprig of wish-fulfilling tree, the *Vīṇā,* lotus, a bunch of flowers and a pot of gems.

(30) Yoga Gaṇapati (the great Yogī)—

In this form, holding himself in a Yogic stance and bound in a Yogic girdle, he is the colour of the early morning sun and wears blue silk garments. In his hands he holds prayer beads, staff of the *Yogī,* noose and sugar-cane.

(31) Durga Gaṇapati (the saviour)—

In this form, of a huge body, and burnt-gold complexion, he

holds prayer beads, an arrow, goad and tusk in his right hands and a noose, bow, flag, and a rose apple fruit in his left. His garments are of red colour.

(32) Saṅkaṭahara Gaṇapati (the remover of sorrow)—

In this form, seated on a red lotus seat and clad in blue, his complexion is that of the rising sun. On his lap he holds his *Śakti* (power), who is of female form, green in colour, holding a blue flower in her hand. In his hands he holds a goad, noose, and a vessel of *Pāyasam* (milk-sweet). His right hand is in the *Varada* (boon-giving) pose.

Modern forms of Gaṇapati—

Modern Gaṇapati icons or colour prints worshipped in homes are, of several forms.

As a *Sāttvika* deity, he holds a lotus and a bowl of *Modakas* (sweets) in two of his hands and his other hands are in the *Abhaya* (protective) and *Varada* (boon-giving) poses.

The most popular form in which he is represented today is as a benign deity holding an elephant goad, noose and a vessel of *Modaka* sweets. The fourth hand is in the protective pose.

Another popular print has Gaṇapati in the centre with Goddess Lakṣmī, giver of prosperity, on one side and Goddess Sarasvatī, giver of wisdom, on the other, stressing the close affinity between Gaṇapati, prosperity and wisdom.

In the south, a popular framed print seen in *Pūjā* rooms has the Śiva family gathered together as in a family photograph. Śiva and Pārvatī are seen seated on a throne with their sons, Gaṇapati and Kumāra, on either side. At their feet are Nandī, Śiva's bull, the mouse, Gaṇapati's vehicle, and the peacock, the vehicle of Kumāra.

Formless Image—

The form of Gaṇapati used for prayer need not be an image or icon. Any symbol suffices. A small pyramid of turmeric (mixed water) is often kept on a betel leaf and worshipped. Even sand or mud blobs will do. Often a pot *(Kumbha)*, on which thin string is

criss-crossed, symbolises Gaṇapati. It is filled with water (symbolically supposed to be from the seven sacred rivers). Five mango leaves (the five senses) and a coconut, beloved of Gaṇapati, are placed at the mouth of the pot. The pot is then placed on a platform of rice and used for prayer.

Conclusion—

Thus Gaṇapati is a treasure-house of knowledge for the iconologist. The evolution of his icon is a case study of the role of iconographic development itself. All this is in spite of the fact that the most important feature, the elephant head, has remained constant and unchanging. The image of Gaṇapati is, undoubtedly, Yakṣa in conception—short, pot-bellied, and large headed. Yet, like the imps of the Indian nether world, Gaṇapati can be spry, animated and lovable, a veritable puck of Hindu mythology.

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त्वं गुणत्रयातीतः। त्वं देहत्रयातीतः। त्वं कालत्रयातीतः। त्वं मूलाधारस्थितोऽसि नित्यम्। त्वं शक्तित्रयात्मकः। त्वां योगिनो ध्यायन्ति नित्यम्। त्वं ब्रह्मा त्वं विष्णुस्त्वं रुद्रस्त्वमिन्द्रस्त्वमग्निस्त्वं वायुस्त्वं सूर्यस्त्वं चन्द्रस्त्वं ब्रह्म भूर्भुवः स्वरोम्॥

"You are transcendental to the three modes of primal nature. You are beyond the three bodies—gross, subtle and causal. You are beyond the three times—past, present and future. You are eternally located in the *Mūlādhāra*. You are attributed with three powers—*Prabhuśakti, Utsāhaśakti* and *Mantraśakti*. *Yogīs* always meditate upon You. You are Brahmā, You are Viṣṇu, You are Rudra, You are Indra, You are Fire-god, You are Wind-god, You are the Sun god, You are the Moon-god and You are the supreme *Brahma* with attributes and attributeless, You are trifold—*Bhūḥ, Bhuwaḥ, Swaḥ* and *Praṇava*."

—*Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣopaniṣad*

Those actions are not binding by nature which are performed for My sake. Only those actions done for the fulfilment of a mundane desire, are binding.

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (II. 9)

Gaṇeśa-Worship—Structure and Symbols Explained

—*P. Ramachandrachar*

वक्रतुण्ड महाकाय सूर्यकोटि समप्रभ।
निर्विघ्नं कुरु मे देव सर्वकार्येषु सर्वदा॥

Speciality of Hindu Gods in General—

"Too many gods in Hinduism" Laments a bishop. "Those too how ugly, filthy and motley" Abhors a friend; pig (*Varāha*), bird (Garuḍa), serpent (Śeṣa), sub-human (Hanumān), semi-human (Narasiṁha, Gaṇeśa etc.,), plants (*Tulasī, Pīpala* etc.,), planets (nine) and even stones (*Śālagrāma, Liṅga* etc.,)— are these Gods? Why? How do they inspire devotion? What about the number of their heads? Two (Agni), three (Dattātreya), four (Brahmā), thousand (*Sahasra Śīrṣa Puruṣa*); three eyes to Śiva, thousand eyes to Indra. Besides each has his own vehicle; his/her own favourite dish; (*Modaka* for Gaṇeśa etc.,) a number of hands with a variety of weapons. Still bewildering is that each village, town and even a family has a deity of its own. What kind of religion is this? It seems, everything is divine and holy for them. That's it. Exactly true. Everything is divine to them. The Supreme has the power to appear in any form to a devotee that he likes. But yet they have a deeper meaning. *Gītā* declares—

यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा।
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोंऽशसंभवम्॥

(X. 41)

"Whatever being is excellent; splendid and mighty; know that to have come into existence from a fragment of My splendour."

Gods of other Ancient Civilizations—

But the gods of almost the same description as above; in all other ancient civilizations of the world, are only a remote memory

now; even in their own lands. Their idols are eating dust in some museum or hidden under ruins somewhere. The gods of ancient, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Masopotomia, Maya, Inca, Celt etc., were nothing but magnified forms of human jealousy, hatred, lust, power-intoxication, favouritism and persecution. Even their so-called Supreme Gods such as Zeus, Jupiter, Marduk etc., were not spiritually high. So all of them vanished when some reasonable religions peeped in. The nature of these Gods is aptly described by William Shakespeare. "As flies to wanton boys; so are we to gods. They kill us for their sport." There can be no better explanation.

Mystic Forms of Hindu Deities—

But the Hindu deities are diametrically opposite—

(1) They hold some posts which represent some principle or authority.

(2) Their's is a post of spiritual grade and efficiency.

(3) They strive to improve their spiritual status towards final emancipation, from their positions.

(4) They have to vacate their posts either, on being promoted to a superior post or on reaching their goal.

For example: A divine being named Purandara is holding the post of Indra, the lord of heaven (heaven is not final liberation). He retires at the end of this *Manvantara* (71 *Caturyugas* each consisting of about 4320000 years of earth). The present God of love *Kāma* will be promoted to ascend that post. So we find a logical gradation in metaphysical development in the divine administration of the universe for which it is created.The gods (spiritual beings) change; but the post remains and continues through the eternal cycles of creation and dissolution. So, these gods are alive even today as agents of the Supreme. They are invoked, worshipped and praised.

(5) They are like departmental heads in the administration of the Supreme God who is all-pervasive.

The position of Śrī Gaṇeśa—

The post and powers of Śrī Gaṇeśa are specified in our scriptures. There is a sect (*Gāṇapatyas*) which considers Him as

the Supreme Being, or better to say that the Supreme Being is considered as appearing in the shape of Gaṇeśa. But on largely accepted grounds it is believed that He is—(1) Gaṇapati (2) Vighna-Rāja and mostly in South as (3) Vidyā Gaṇapati.

(1) Gaṇapati means 'Lord of a group or groups'. Which group? It is *Jana Gaṇa* that is people's group. Vighna-Rāja means the king of obstacles. He can put or remove obstacles in accordance with the person and merit of the case. Vidyā Gaṇapati means that He is the head of the department of education with powers to bestow, remove or inspire knowledge. But the education minister in the present divine hierarchy, is the goddess Sarasvatī, the consort of Brahmā the creator of the universe.

Seeing the talent of Gaṇeśa sage Vyāsa who is considered to be the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu (protector of all) utilised His services in putting into script the great epic *Mahābhārata* which he had shaped in his mind.

During the freedom movement Śrī Lokamānya Bālagaṅgādhara Tilaka turned the annual observances of Gaṇeśa festival into a national celebration to unite the people of the land with a divine fervour. So Gaṇeśa became not only the beloved Lord of each family but also a symbol of national integration.

His Shape and Symbols—

The following are His main symbols—

(1) Tapta Kañcana Sannibha—

Having the colour of hot gold i.e., *Kesarī* that appears at the top portion of our national flag which indicates renunciation of worldly pleasures. It is also a symbol of hope towards spiritual upliftment. For this, He is called Siddhi Vināyaka also (master of occult powers).

(2) Gajānana—Elephant-Head—

How did Gaṇeśa get an elephant-head and what is its significance? Stories in the *Purāṇas* differ about the way Gaṇeśa came to life. This is due to the different happenings in different *Manvantaras*. But the authority for the present age is *Skanda Purāṇa*. *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* is not counted among the *Mahāpurāṇas*.

One day Goddess Pārvatī applied some scent to her body before taking bath. Then she scratched some paste-like dirt from her body and shaped into a human form. She then inducted a divine being into it which enlivened, into a boy. The bodies of gods are not constituted as bodies on earth (i.e., carbon based; oxygen breathing with water as a solvent). They are composed of light particles and are self-illuminating. The gods can convert them into neutrons and pass through any concrete object and again reframe them. That means that they can appear and disappear to the human eyes at will. Then Pārvatī asked her son to sit on the outer threshold of the house and not to allow anyone inside, until she comes out after taking bath. But Śiva, the consort of Pārvatī returned home from outside. Geṇeśa stopped Him at the entrance. After a heated debate Śiva cut off the head of Gaṇeśa with His trident and went in. Pārvatī saw this and in great sorrow began to demand back the life of her son. But the mutilated head could not be re-installed on the shoulder. Then Śiva ordered His attendants to bring the head of any being who lies with its head to the North. Only an elephant was found in that posture. It is said that it was the body of Gajāsura— a demon with an elephant head previously killed by Śiva. Its head was cut off and brought before Śiva. He then performed a divine surgery and installed the elephant head on the shoulder of Gaṇeśa and the divine boy regained his life (the whole story is a drama enacted to entertain the devotees who cannot understand the subtle metaphysical truths).

The belief that one should not lie with one's head to the north seems to be scientific. As we know the earth acts as a huge magnet. Every object small or big acts as a magnet though its particles are not properly arranged in the North-South pattern. The law of magnet says that unlike-poles attract and like-poles repel. The head of a person being the North-pole gets a repelling thrush when it is put towards the North. Though the effect is too weak to be recognised at once, it may cause nervous weakness and other ailments in the long run.

(3) Vakratuṇḍa, Ekadanta and Lambodara—

Gaṇeśa has a broken tusk and so a single tusk. He has a bulged belly.

During the annual festival of Gaṇeśa He visits the house of every devotee and accepts their lovely offerings of sweet dishes. To show that their offerings of love are not ordinary or small, He bulged His belly to provide more space. Once, when He was returning home after the festival a cobra came on the way. His vehicle the rat was frightened and ran helter-skelter. Gaṇeśa rolled down and the bulged belly cracked. All the sweet dishes burst out. Seeing this the moon-god Candra (guardian angel for subconscious mind) laughed loudly. Gaṇeśa became furious and plucking out one of His tusks hit the moon-god. It was immoral on the part of a god to laugh at anyone in trouble. It is unbecoming to his position. Moon retreated in pain and could not return to duty. Gaṇeśa collected the spilt food and inserted it back into His belly because it was so valuable. He caught the cobra and tied to His belly as a belt. The rat was consoled and brought back. Both were happy.

The rat eats up food grains both in fields and houses. It denotes fickle and greedy mind. Gaṇeśa rides upon it and keeps it under His control. So He is called as *Mūṣaka Vāhana* i. e., using the rat as His chariot. The serpent is venomous and kills rat population. But that also should be checked. So He controls the cobra also.

The nights became dark without the moon and plants could not grow properly. The ecological balance was upset. So all other gods requested Gaṇeśa to pardon him. Gaṇeśa agreed on condition that the moon should wax during the first half of the lunar month and be full on the full moon day. He should wane in the second half (This is according to the *Śuklādi Māsa* system in which the month is taken to begin on the first day of bright fortnight) and should be out of sight on the new moon day. So was it arranged.

(5) Caturbhuja (Four-armed)—

They denote four aims of human life i.e., (1) Virtuous life, (2) Honest earnings, (3) Necessary enjoyment, (4) Final liberation.

One hand has *Aṅkuśa* (the elephant goad) to control those who behave like an intoxicated elephant. In the second hand there is *Pāśa* or noose to bind those who go astray from the path of righteousness. The third holds a sweet dish (*Modaka*)—a reward for those who tread the path of truth. The fourth is the raised palm of assurance to those who are in trouble or threat.

The significance of Gaṇeśa is that He is adored by all the sects of *Sanātana Dharma* (the ancient form of modern Hinduism). Let alone *Śaivas*, even the *Vaiṣṇavas* and *Śāktas* worship Him first at the commencement of any ritual or an auspicious celebration. But now-a-days some greedy businessmen and entertainment-seekers make His idols in various shapes, dresses and poses during the festival, lusty dances, dramas and orchestra are arranged during the festival. The sense of holiness, the mood of chastity and respect are absent. He is used as a doll for fun. Devotional songs, spiritual discourses and *Kīrtanas* (*Bhajanas* with holy story-telling) are almost absent. A sad state of affairs indeed!

Hariḥ Om Tat Sat.

An ideal Brahman must be good-natured, good looking, truthful, sparingly speaking, not greedy, liberal and generous, with virtuous conduct, having controlled his senses, fully satisfied with whatever little he gets, always away from hoarding, one who has conquered anger, with a cheerful face, one who is not a carper or a cheat, grateful by nature, of loving nature, away from carping, always preaching virtues, himself a virtuous man, observing all the religious vows, pure of conduct and character, expert on *Smṛtis* and Vedic lores, patient, a knower of history, with a broad outlook, accepted and respected by all, clever in all the arts and astrology, forgiving, a product of high family, unmiserly and transparent. These qualities are the real ornaments for a brahman.

—*Skanda Purāṇa, Kāśī Khaṇḍa* (56. 37—42)

The Worship of Haridrā Gaṇeśa

This aspect of Haridrā Gaṇeśa is most easily propitiable and it can bestow upon the devotees, from mundane prosperity to the ultimate liberation. It all depends upon the devotee how he worships him. The details of Tantric procedure of worship are a bit lengthy no doubt, but they are most scientific and capable of yielding results easily and quickly.

Before starting the worship of any deity (and Haridrā Gaṇeśa is not the exception) all the preliminary preparations and worships like making *Vedīs, Bhadra,* invoking the other gods, *Śaṅkhasthāpana, Ghaṇṭāsthāpana*, the two protective lamps, *Yantrasthāpana* or *Mūrtisthāpana, Prāṇapratiṣṭhā* (infusing life in the *Yantra* or image) should be done then the main deity Haridrā Gaṇeśa should be invoked and worshipped.

Haridrā Gaṇeśa Mantra—

ॐ हुँगँग्लौँ हरिद्रागणपतये वर वरद सर्वजनहृदयं स्तंभय स्तंभय स्वाहा॥

In all thirty-two letters.

Viniyoga—

Taking water in right hand one should speak the following *Mantra*—

ॐ अस्य हरिद्रागणनायकमंत्रस्य मदन ऋषिः, अनुष्टुप् छंदः, हरिद्रागणनायको देवता ममाभीष्टसिद्ध्यर्थे जपे विनियोगः।।

One can mention his specific purpose in place of 'ममाभीष्टसिद्ध्यर्थे'.

Aṅga Nyāsa—

Speaking the following *Mantras* the worshipper should touch the limbs concerned.

ॐ मदन ऋषये नमः शिरसि (head)। अनुष्टुप्छंदसे नमः मुखे (mouth)।

हरिद्रागणनायकदेवतायै नमः हृदि (heart)। विनियोगाय नमः सर्वांगे। (from head to the feet).

ॐ हुँगँग्लौँ अंगुष्ठाभ्यां नमः (joining two thumbs together), हरिद्रागणपतये तर्जनीभ्यां नमः (two fore fingers together), वर वरद मध्यमाभ्यां नमः (two middle fingers), सर्वजनहृदयं अनामिकाभ्यां नमः (both ring fingers), स्तंभय स्तंभय कनिष्ठिकाभ्यां नमः (both little fingers), स्वाहा करतलकरपृष्ठाभ्यां नमः (touching the back of one hand with the palm of the other).

ॐ हुँगँग्लौँ हृदयाय नमः (heart), हरिद्रागणपतये शिरसे स्वाहा (head), वर वरद शिखायै वषट् (tuft), सर्वजनहृदयं कवचाय हुँ (touching both the shoulders with the finger-tips of two hands separately), स्तंभय स्तंभय नेत्रत्रयाय वौषट् touching the three eyes with the three fingers— (fore, middle and ring), स्वाहा अस्त्राय फट् (right hand moving around the head anti-clockwise and clapping thrice).

Dhyāna (ध्यान)—

पाशाङ्कुशौ मोदकमेकदंतं करैर्दधानं कनकासनस्थम्।
हारिद्रखण्डप्रतिमं त्रिनेत्रं पीतांशुकं रात्रिगणेशमीडे॥

"I worship Haridrā Gaṇeśa who is holding in His hands a noose, a goad, sweet balls and a tusk; seated on a golden throne, having a hue of turmeric piece, three-eyed and covering his body with an yellow wrapper." Meditating this way, in the *Sarvatobhadra* or *Gaṇeśabhadra* made on the *Vedī* (seat), invoking and seating the deities, *Maṇḍūka* etc. These deities should be worshipped in general with *Mantra*—

ॐ मं मंडूकादिपरतत्त्वांतपीठदेवताभ्यो नमः॥

Then nine *Śaktis* of the *Pīṭha* should be worshipped on the *Bhadra* starting from the east—

ॐ तीव्रायै नमः। ॐ चालिन्यै नमः। ॐ नंदायै नमः। ॐ भोगदायै नमः। ॐ कामरूपिण्यै नमः। ॐ उग्रायै नमः। ॐ तेजोवत्यै नमः। ॐ सत्यायै नमः। and in the centre ॐ विघ्ननाशिन्यै नमः।

All the available *Pūjā* materials may be offered to them with these *Mantras* separately. Then taking the *Yantra* or image made of gold, keeping it in a copper plate, bathing with ghee, then with milk and then with purified water,drying it with a clean and pure cloth-piece saying—"ह्रीं सर्वशक्तिकमलासनाय नमः" a flower should be given as the seat for the deity. Then *Prāṇapratiṣṭhā* should be made. After that, offering sixteen *Pūjā* materials beginning with *Pādya* (ablution

for washing feet), the deity should be requested to accord permission for *Pūjā*. Then starts *Āvaraṇa Pūjā*. Having flowers in the joined hands saying—

ॐ संविन्मय परेश त्वं परामृतरसप्रिय।
अनुज्ञां देहि गणप परिवारार्चनाय मे।।

Then *Puṣpāñjali* should be offered by saying— "पूजितास्तर्पिता: सन्तु". After permission is obtained, on the six petals of the lotus starting from south-east corner *Pūjā* should be performed saying—

ॐ हुँ गँ ग्लौं हृदयाय नमः हृदये श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ हरिद्रागणपतये शिरसे स्वाहा शिरसि श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ वर वरद शिखायै वषट् शिखायां श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ सर्वजनहृदयं कवचाय हुं। ॐ स्तंभयस्तंभय नेत्रत्रयाय वौषट् नेत्रयो: श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ स्वाहा अस्त्राय फट् सर्वत्र श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः।

This way in all the six limbs, Gaṇeśa should be worshipped. Again taking *Puṣpāñjali* pronouncing *Mūla Mantra* the worshipper should say—

अभीष्टसिद्धिं मे देहि शरणागतवत्सल।
भक्त्या समर्पये तुभ्यं प्रथमावरणार्चनम्।।

Puṣpāñjali should be offered and 'पूजितास्तर्पिता: संतु' should be said. Then in between the worshipper and the deity, in the eight petalled lotus, starting from east, in four quarters and four corners, taking sandal, rice and flower with the right thumb and forefinger (other fingers may be excluded) saying—

ॐ वामायै नमः वामा श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ ज्येष्ठायै नमः ज्येष्ठा श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ रौद्र्यै नमः रौद्री श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ काल्यै नमः काली श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ कलपदादिकायै नमः कलपदादिका श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ विकारिण्यै नमः विकारिणी श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ बलायै नमः बला श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ प्रमथिन्यै नमः प्रमथिनी श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः।

Now before the main deity—

ॐ सर्वभूतदमन्यै नमः सर्वभूतदमनी श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ मनोन्मन्यै नमः मनोन्मनी श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः।

After that in all the four quarters beginning from east—

ॐ प्रमोदाय नमः प्रमोद श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ सुमुखाय नमः सुमुख श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ दुर्मुखाय नमः दुर्मुख श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ विघ्ननाशाय नमः विघ्ननाश श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः।

Then *Puṣpāñjali* in the hands, after pronouncing the *Mantra* the worshipper should request in the following words—

अभीष्टसिद्धिं मे देहि शरणागतवत्सल।
भक्त्या समर्पये तुभ्यं द्वितीयावरणार्चनम्।।

Puṣpāñjali should be offered and 'पूजितास्तर्पिताः सन्तु' should be said. Then on the tips of eight petals—

ॐ आँ ब्राह्म्यै नमः ब्राह्मी श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ ईं महेश्वर्यै नमः महेश्वरी श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ ऊं कौमार्यै नमः कौमारी श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ ॠं वैष्णव्यै नमः वैष्णवी श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ ऌँ वाराह्यै नमः वाराही श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ ऐं इन्द्राण्यै नमः इंद्राणी श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ औं चामुंडायै नमः चामुंडा श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः। ॐ अः महालक्ष्म्यै नमः महालक्ष्मी श्रीपादुकां पूजयामि तर्पयामि नमः।

These eight should be worshipped then again *Puṣpāñjali* with main *Mantra*. Requesting—

अभीष्टसिद्धिं मे देहि शरणागतवत्सल।
भक्त्या समर्पये तुभ्यं तृतीयावरणार्चनम्॥

Then *Puṣpāñjali* and 'विशेषार्घ्यं' and then 'पूजितास्तर्पिताः संतु'. After that, worshipping protecting deities of ten quarters and their weapons also. Offering incense and salutations etc., *Japa* should be made. The *Puraścaraṇa* consists of four lacs. The materials for oblation—turmeric powder, ghee and rice. The oblations forty thousand. *Tarpaṇa* four thousand. *Mārjana* four hundred. Brahman feasting forty only.

After one has done this much, then the *Mantra* becomes accomplished and the person can use the *Mantra* anytime for any purpose as desired.

On the fourth day of bright fortnight a virgin should be requested to prepare turmeric paste. Besmearing the body with that turmeric paste, bathing himself with water the worshipper should worship Haridrā Gaṇeśa. Before the deity, he should make the *Japa* for one thousand and eight times. Pouring one hundred oblations into the fire,should feed *Brahmacārīs* and *Kumārīs*. By doing this he gets a deserving preceptor. Pouring oblations of parched paddy, a girl gets suitable groom and a man gets desired bride. An issueless sterile lady can get a son and so on.

Śrī Gaṇeśa in Śrī Mādhva Sampradāya

—*Tamraparni K. Narasimhan*

Śrī Gaṇeśa is the most popular god of the Hindu pantheon. Devout Hindus worship Śrī Gaṇeśa at the beginning of all auspicious functions and invoke His blessings for their successful completion. In this article an attempt is made to give an account of the status of Śrī Gaṇeśa, mode of worshipping Him, His *Mantra* and other relevant matters according to Śrī Madhvācārya.

Śrī Madhva dichotomizes reality into *Svatantra* (independent) and *Paratantra* (dependent) and because of this dichotomy his system is called *Dvaita*.* Independent is that which for its nature (*Svarūpa*), for not being an object of valid knowledge (*Pramāviṣayatva*) and for its activity (*Pravṛtti*) does not depend on another. What depends in these respects on another is dependent *Tattva* or dependent reality.† Śrī Viṣṇu is the unique, highest, independent, real. All else is dependent on Him, including the Goddess Śrī Lakṣmī, the presiding deity of *Acit Prakṛti*. The *Jīvas* the finite selves—are a constituent part of the dependent reality. Because of the difference and disparity found everywhere among finite selves, in their constitution and equipment, there is a hierarchy *Tāratamya* or gradation among gods, demons and men. The gradation of beings as well as the supremacy of Śrī Viṣṇu over all,

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*स्वतन्त्रमस्वतन्त्रं च द्वैविधं तत्त्वमिष्यते ।।
स्वतन्त्रो भगवान् विष्णु: ।।

—Śrī Madhva, *Tattvasaṅkhyāna*

†स्वरूप परमिति प्रवृत्ति लक्षण सत्ता त्रैविध्ये
परानपेक्षं स्वतन्त्रं परापेक्षमस्वतन्त्रम् ।।

—Śrī Jayatīrtha, *Tattvasaṅkhyāna Ṭīkā*

must be understood. Without these there is no release for anyone under any circumstance.* In this gradation Śrī Lakṣmī comes next to Śrī Viṣṇu, infinitely lower to Him in Her qualities and forms a class by herself. Then come Brahmā and Vāyu; and then Garuḍa, Śeṣa and Rudra and so on. In his *Aṇuvyākhyāna,* a metrical commentary on the *Brahmasūtras*, Śrī Madhva quotes the following from *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* to show the rank of Śrī Gaṇeśa in this scheme of gradation—

मित्र पर्जन्य मध्यस्थावश्विनौ विघ्नवित्तपौ।

(*Aṇuvyākhyāna* III. 3. 35)

which means that the twin Aśvin *Devatās*, Gaṇapati and Kubera are equal in rank and come between the Āditya called Mitra and Parjanya, in descending order. *Laghutāratamya Stotra* is a work of six verses composed by Kalyāṇī Devī, elder sister of Śrī Madhva. It deals with the gradation of gods and groups them into twenty-six graded classes with Śrī Viṣṇu in the top most class. Śrī Gaṇeśa occupies the eighteenth class along with Viṣvaksena, Aśvins, Kubera and eighty-six gods eligible for *Somapāna* in sacrifices.† This is the rank of Śrī Gaṇeśa in *Mādhva* tradition.

In his *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya* Śrī Madhva identifies the four forms of the intuiting self with the four forms of Śrī Viṣṇu presiding over the four stages of our psychophysical and transmundane existence: the waking (*Jāgrat*), dream (*Svapna*), deep sleep (*Suṣupti*) and *Mokṣa* (*Turīya*). The first two *Mantras* of this *Upaniṣad* describe the *Upāsanā* of Śrī Viṣṇu with the syllable *Om*. The third *Mantra* is—

सोऽयमात्मा चतुष्पात् जागरितस्थानो बहिः प्रज्ञः सप्ताङ्ग एकोनविंशति मुखः स्थूलभुक् वैश्वानरः प्रथमः पादः।

While commenting on this *Mantra* Śrī Madhva quotes the following from a work called *Mahāyoga*—

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*तारतम्यं ततो ज्ञेयं सर्वोच्चत्वं हरेस्तथा।
एतद् विना न कस्यापि विमुक्तिः स्यात् कथंचन।।

—Śrī Madhva, *Śrīman Mahābhārata Tātparya Nirṇaya* (I. 80)

†विष्वक्सेनोऽश्विनौ तौ गणपतिधनपावुक्तशेषाः शतस्थाः देवाः।

(*Laghutāratamya Stotram* 3)

चतुर्धावस्थितो देहे परमात्मा सनातनः।
वैश्वानरो जागरितस्थानगो गजवक्त्रकः।।
निर्माता बाह्य संवित्तेर्जीवानां तदगोचरः।
अष्टादश मुखान्यस्य पुमाकाराणि सर्वशः।
मध्यमं तु गजाकारं चतुर्बाहुः परः पुमान्।।
पादौ हस्तिकरो हस्ता इति सप्ताङ्ग ईरितः।
स्थूलान् भोगान् इन्द्रियैः स शुभान् भुङ्क्ते नचाशुभान्।।
विश्वं स्थूलं समुद्दिष्टं सर्वगम्यत्व हेतुतः।
तत्सम्बंधी नरोऽनाशाद् वैश्वानर उदाहृतः।।
विनायकस्तु विश्वस्य ध्यानादैत् गजवक्त्रताम्।

This means the imperishable *Paramātmā* indwells the body of everyone assuming four forms; of these four, the form called *Vaiśvānara* is in the right eye. When the *Jīva* stays in the right eye, he is awake and so the right eye is called the *Jāgaritasthāna*. *Vaiśvānara* has an elephantine head. Remaining invisible to the *Jīvātmā*, He enables them to cognize external objects. He has eighteen human faces and an elephant head in the middle; two legs, a trunk and four arms make His seven limbs. *Viśva* is the gross world; He derives the essence of this gross world through the senses of the *Jīvas* and so He is called *Vaiśva*.* Though He is in the body of the *Jīva*, He is imperishable and hence He is called *Nara*. *Vaiśva* plus *Nara* is *Vaiśvānara*. By meditating upon this *Vaiśvānara* Śrī Gaṇeśa acquired His elephantine-face. This is in conformity with the *Śruti*—"तं यथा यथोपासते तदेव भवति" one attains that form of Him which one meditates upon. Śrī Madhva quotes this *Śruti* in his *Bhāgavata Tātparya Nirṇaya* while commenting on the verse—

यत्र यत्र मनो देही धारयेत् सकलं धिया।
स्नेहात् द्वेषाद् भयाद् वाऽपि याति तत् तत् सरूपताम्।।

(*Bhāgavata* XI. 9. 22)

whatever the mind of the embodied one beholds, with love, hatred

*Why Śrī Viṣṇu of perfect bliss does this ? In his *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* (I.2.11), Śrī Madhva quotes the following from *Padma Purāṇa* 'चेष्टा न ज्ञायते क्वचित्' who can possibly conceive the action of the Lord of perfect bliss? So it is His *Līlā*.

or fear, a similar form is attained. Thus according to Śrī Madhva, Śrī Gaṇeśa is an ardent devotee of Śrī Viṣṇu and He acquired His elephantine face by meditating upon His indweller *Vaiśvānara*, a form of Śrī Viṣṇu.

Śrī Madhva's scheme of *Upāsanā* is based on *Tāratamya* or gradation. The gods of the Hindu pantheon constitute the retinue of Śrī Viṣṇu, the Supreme Reality. In his *Bhāgavata Tātparya* (XI. 5.43) Śrī Madhva quotes the following from a work called *Hari Saṁhitā*—

प्राधान्येन हरिर्ध्येयस्तद् संबन्धात्सुरादयः।
ध्येयान्नान्यत् क्वचित् ध्यायेद्धरावनुपयोगि यः।।

meaning Śrī Viṣṇu is to be worshipped as the Supreme Godhead; Śrī Lakṣmī and others are to be worshipped as His retinue; none else, unrelated to Him is to be meditated upon. In his *Chāndogya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya* Śrī Madhva quotes the following—

उच्च क्रमागतत्वेन कुर्युः पूजा हरेः सदा।
लक्ष्म्यादेः क्रमशः पूजां ज्ञात्वा भागवता इति।
स्वतन्त्र पूज्यता बुद्ध्या न दद्युः किञ्च कस्यचित्।।

One has to worship Śrī Hari as Supreme Godhead and others like Śrī Lakṣmī and Brahmā according to their merit and never as independent gods. In the same work he quotes further—

देवतानुक्रमज्ञाश्च विष्णोः परमताविदः।
एकान्तिनस्ते विज्ञेया यथाक्रमपरास्तथा।।

Ekānta Bhaktas are those who know this gradation of gods and realise that Śrī Viṣṇu is the one Supreme Godhead at the top of this gradation. Thus in *Śrī Mādhva Sampradāya* the gods of the Hindu pantheon are ranked in the order of their merit and worshipped accordingly. In his *Aṇuvyākhyāna* (III.4) Śrī Madhva quotes the following from *Pravṛtta*—

तारतम्येन तद्भक्तेष्वपि भक्तिर्विनिश्चयात्।
कर्तव्यैषापि तद् भक्तिर्लोकवेदानुसारतः।।
....
भक्ति दोषोह्यसौ यत्र तद् भक्तेष्वपि भक्तिमान्।

One should always be devoted not only to Śrī Viṣṇu but to His

devotees too according to their merit; devotion to *Haribhaktas* is equivalent to devotion to Him; the *Bhakti* of one who is not devoted to *Haribhaktas* is tainted. Not only that such *Bhaktas* incur the wrath of Śrī Viṣṇu too. To substantiate this Śrī Madhva writes in his *Aitareya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya* that Śrī Viṣṇu disowns those wicked ones who are not devoted to His devotees; they are deprived of happiness here and in the other world too. So devout *Mādhvas* worship Śrī Gaṇeśa and His indweller Śrī Viśvamūrti at the commencement of all auspicious functions; *Kalpokta Pūjā* is offered to Śrī Gaṇeśa on *Bhādrapada Śukla Caturthīs* to invoke the grace of Śrī Gaṇeśa to overcome all obstacles.

Tantra Sāra Saṅgraha of Śrī Madhva is an abridgement of a bigger work of that name by sage Śrī Vyāsa. This work covers briefly the rules governing *Vaiṣṇava* modes of worship and initiation. It consists of 442 verses and is divided into four chapters. The last chapter is a resume of the special *Mantras* bearing on the entire subject, set forth in the original *Tantrasāra* of sage Śrī Vyāsa. Verses 91-92 of this chapter describe *Śrī Gaṇapati Mantra* and mode of meditating on him—

मो न य दा सा प्र प्र क्षि व्यत्यस्तो विघ्नराण् मनुः ।
रक्ताम्बरो रक्ततनू रक्त माल्यानुलेपनः ।।
लम्बोदरो गजमुखः पाशदन्तांकुशाभयः ।
बिभ्रद्ध्येयो विघ्नहरः कामदस्त्वरया.... ।।

Gaṇapati Mantra is obtained by reading the letters (मो न य दा सा प्र प्र क्षि), (क्षिप्रप्रसादाय नमः) in the reverse order. Śrī Gaṇapati, the deity of this *Mantra* has red body, red garments, red garlands, red sandal paste; He is pot bellied, has elephantine face; He holds *Pāśa, Danta, Aṅkuśa* and *Abhaya Hasta* in four arms. This *Mantra* wards off obstacles and yields result quickly.

Śrī Jagannātha Dāsa of the eighteenth century is a forcible writer of *Mādhva* philosophy, His *magnum opus*, the *Harikathāmṛtasāra*, written in Kannada in the *Bhāmini Ṣaṭpadī* metre is an epitome of *Mādhva* philosophy. It consists of 32 *Sandhis* (Chapters). Chapter 28 of this work is addressed to Śrī

Gaṇeśa in the form of prayer. In fact it is a prayer addressed to Śrī Viśvamūrti, the indweller of Śrī Gopāla Dāsa, the preceptor of Śrī Jagannātha Dāsa as well as to Śrī Gaṇapati in a secondary sense. A brief summary of this chapter is as follows—

"Śrī Gaṇeśa is the son of Maheśvara and Pārvatī; He is the presiding deity of *Ākāśa*; He is the recipient of the grace of sage Śrī Vyāsa; He knows the esoteric meaning of the epics, *Purāṇas* and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*; Śrī Viṣṇu has bestowed Him with powers to remove the obstacles of those who worship Him and create obstacles to those who fail to worship Him. Indra, Śrī Rāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Yudhiṣṭhira worshipped Him and achieved success in their endeavours. Duryodhana failed to worship Him and hence got destroyed with his kith and kin. May Śrī Gaṇeśa help us to overcome our ego, to keep off our mind from sense objects and to direct our senses towards Śrī Viṣṇu. May He bless us with the company of the good.

Let me conclude this article with the Vedic prayer addressed by Śrī Lakṣmī (Śrī Durgā Devī) to Śrī Puruṣottama (Śrī Viṣṇu). In a secondary sense it applies to Śrī Gaṇeśa also.

नि षु सीद गणपते गणेषु त्वामाहुर्विप्रतमं कवीनाम्।
न ऋते त्वत् क्रियते किं चनारे महामर्कं मघवञ्चित्रमर्च।।

(*Ṛgveda* X. 112. 9)

O Gaṇapati, Lord of the senses and their presiding deities, Thou art the best among the gods. Near or far no action takes place without Thy grace. So, Thou of perfect bliss, Lord of *Yajñas*, and the most marvellous one, inhabiting me worship Thyself as I am powerless to do so without Thy activation.

Motivated by selfish desires, a man does various kinds of deeds and consequently has got to reap the results good or bad. And the virtuous and evil actions become the causes of pleasure and pain.

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (VIII. 61)

Twenty-one Important Places of Lord Gaṇeśa in India

(1) Moreshvar—

This is the foremost pilgrimage centre of Lord Gaṇeśa. Here is a temple of Mayūreśa Gaṇeśa. This place is situated at a distance of about 65 kilometres from Pune.

(2) Prayaga—

This important pilgrimage place is situated in Uttar Pradesh. This is known as *Oṅkāra Gaṇapati Kṣetra.* The legend goes that in the beginning of creation *Oṅkāra* manifesting itself alongwith *Vedas* established this image and worshipped it.

(3) Kashi—

This area is known as *Dhuṇḍhirājakṣetra* and there is a famous temple of Dhuṇḍhirāja Gaṇeśa.

(4) Kalamba—

This place is known as *Cintāmaṇi Kṣetra.* To get himself relieved of the curse of sage Gautama, Indra established and worshipped Cintāmaṇi Gaṇeśa. The old name is Kadambapur. To reach here there is a bus service from the town Yavatamala of Barar.

(5) Adosha—

This place is located at a distance of eight kilometres from Samanera Railway Station, on Nagapur Chiṁdavada section. This area is famous as *Śamī Vighneśa Kṣetra.* It is a place where several gods and sages performed austerities for the destruction of demons—Mahāpāpa, Saṅkaṭa and Śatru. They also established a temple for Lord Gaṇeśa. Here Lord Vāmana had also worshipped Gaṇeśajī before going to king Vali.

(6) Pali—

Ancient name for this place is Pallipura. Lord Gaṇeśa manifested Himself on account of intense devotion of a boy of *Vaiśya* community namely *Ballāla.* Therefore this locality is designated as *Ballāla Vināyaka Kṣetra.* It is situated in the district of Kolaba of Maharashtra.

(7) Parinera—

This is called *Maṅgala-Mūrti Kṣetra.* The planet Mars worshipped Lord Gaṇeśa by performing austerities. In scriptures it is said that this place is situated on the bank of Narmadā but proper situation is not traceable.

(8) Ganga-Masale—

This is known as *Bhālacandra Gaṇeśa Kṣetra.* The deity Moon worshipped Gaṇeśajī here. This temple is located in the midst of river Godāvarī at a distance of about twenty-four kilometres from Sailu Railway station in Maharashtra.

(9) Rakshasabhuvan—

This place is situated at a distance of about fifty-four kilometres from Jalan on the bank of Godāvarī. This is known as *Vijña Gaṇeśa Kṣetra.* Sage Dattātreya performed penances here. He established a temple of Vijñāna Gaṇeśajī and also worshipped Him.

(10) Theur—

This place is located at a distance of about eight kilometres from Pune. For removing the hurdles in the process of creation of the universe Brahmā set up a Gaṇeśa image here and worshipped Him.

(11) Siddhatek—

The ancient name for this place is Siddhāśrama. It is situated at a distance of about ten kilometres from Borivali station on Bombay-Raichur section on the bank of Bhīmā river. To kill Madhu and Kaiṭabha demons, Lord Viṣṇu worshipped Lord Gaṇeśa at this place. In the end of *Dvāpara* age, Vedavyāsajī worshipped this image of Lord Gaṇeśa set up by Lord Viṣṇu to make a division of *Vedas.* So that no hurdle during this undertaking may come.

(12) Rajanagaon—

This locality is famous as *Maṇipura Kṣetra.* In the first war with Tripurāsura Lord Śiva could not get success. He could succeed in the second war with that demon only when He adored Lord Gaṇeśa at this place. An idol set up by Lord Śiva is found here. There is a bus service from Pune to Rajanagaon.

(13) Vijayapur—

The legend goes that Lord Gaṇeśa manifested Himself for destroying Analāsura at this place. In scriptures it is said to be situated in Andhra Pradesh. But no definite clue is available as to the situation of this temple.

(14) Kashyapashrama—

This place is also mentioned in scriptures but exact location is not available. Sage Kaśyapa had established and worshipped the image of Lord Gaṇeśa in his hermitage.

(15) Ganeshapur—

The demon Maya built three cities (*Tripuras*). The demons living there set up a temple of Gaṇeśajī and worshipped Him at this place. But this locality is also not traceable.

(16) Lenyadri—

Pārvatī performed penance here for begetting Gaṇeśa as her son. This place is situated at a distance of about eight kilometres from Juar Taluka in Pune district.

(17) Berola—

Lord Kārtikeya established this temple of Gaṇeśa. It is known as Lakṣa Vināyaka. While fighting with Tārakāsura, Lord Kārtikeya could not win over him. Then on the advice of Lord Śiva, Kārtikeya installed Gaṇeśajī and worshipped Him at this place. This locality is known *Elapur Kṣetra.* There is a bus service from Aurangabad to this place.

(18) Padmalaya—

This is the ancient *Pravāla Kṣetra.* It is situated at a distance of about eight kilometres from Mahasavad Railway station which itself is about twenty-five kilometres away from Pachora junction

on Bombay-Bhusawal section. Kārtavīrya and Śeṣajī worshipped Lord Gaṇeśa at this place. There are two images of Gaṇeśa established by these two. There is a tank *Ugama* just in front of the temple.

(19) Namalgaon—

This area is an ancient one. It is known as *Amalāśramakṣetra.* To get relieved of his mother's curse Lord Yama worshipped Gaṇeśajī at this place. This image is famous for fulfilling the desires of the worshippers. There is a bus service from Jalana to Ghosapur. From Ghosapur we have to go on foot to Namalgaon.

(20) Rajur—

This locality is designated as *Rājasadanakṣetra.* It is at a distance of about twenty-two kilometres from Jalana. Lord Gaṇeśa made a sermon of *Gaṇeśa Gītā* to king Vareṇya after killing Sindurāsura.

(21) Kumbhakonam—

This is an important pilgrimage of South India. This is also called as *Śveta Vighneśvarakṣetra.* On the bank of Kāverī the image of Sudhā Gaṇeśa is there. While churning the sea to get ambrosia the gods could not succeed after a lot of labour. Then they installed an image of Gaṇeśa here and worshipped it.

It is said in *Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣa* that the manifested form of *Oṅkāra* alone is God Gaṇapati. In all sorts of auspicious occasions and in the beginning of establishing an image of a deity in a temple or home, Gaṇapati is worshipped. Just as while reciting any *Mantra* it is absolutely necessary to pronounce *Om* in the beginning, similarly on every auspicious occasion the worship of Gaṇapati is compulsory. It is a tradition established by the scriptures not by a fan of Gaṇeśa. All the sects and cults within the range of Vedic religion, have unanymously accepted and followed this ancient tradition.

—*Compiled*

New Light on Gaṇeśa

—*C. V. Bhimasankaram*

I

Symbols are of two types—cosmic and local. Cosmic symbols have universal applications; whereas the local symbols have localised applications in real life. The picture of the cosmos resembles a horse, if it is developed on a two-dimensional screen with the help of a spiritual camera (the method of perceiving this through experience is called *Aśvamedha Yajña*). The sound system of the cosmos takes the picture of Gaṇeśa; the cosmic evolution in the form of a blooming lotus, and so on. Such esoteric symbols (*Om, Svastika* etc.,) are fully discussed in the domain of theosophy. So, Gaṇeśa is nothing but the 'sum total of sounds' present in the universe, having a definite pattern.

II

Sound, only when manifested, becomes perceptible. When unmanifest and lying in the womb of eternal space, it is believed to have an existence. This unmanifest *Brahma* is frequently represented as *Mahā Nāda* or *Anāhata Dhvani*. 'महानाद' (the great sound).

—*Śiva Sahasranāma Stotram* (158)

The perceptible sound vibrations were first originated from the *Ḍamarū* of Lord Śiva, when He danced in ecstacy, during the *Ānanda Tāṇḍava*.

नृत्तावसाने नटराजराजो
ननाद ढक्कां नवपञ्चवारम्।
उद्धर्तुकामः सनकादिसिद्धा-
नेतद्विमर्शे शिवसूत्रजालम्॥

—*Nandikeśvara Kāśikā*

Only two persons were lucky enough to hear such ultrasonic sounds. First one, Pāṇini, who later developed grammatical aphorisms in a scientific way, called the *Śiva-Sūtras,* from those sound vibrations. The second one was the Divine Mother—

'महाताण्डव- साक्षिणी' (The witness of the Supreme Lord's dance)

—*Lalitā Sahasranāma* (232)

who absorbed all those *Varṇas* or letters of the sound on her body as external ornaments and became '*Mātṛkā Varṇa Rūpiṇī*' (*L. S.* 850).

Apart from this, Lord Śiva desired to see the concrete shape of the space just like any other shapes of earth, fire, water, and air. Looking at Umā, Śiva suddenly fixed His glance on the letter 'A' in *Aum* in the space, and Divine Mother concentrated on the letter 'U'. The 'A' became a bull elephant and 'U' a cow elephant. They united and became Gaṇapati, and Mother could conceive this Gaṇeśa only in her mental frame.

कामेश्वरमुखालोककल्पित श्रीगणेश्वर।

—*Lalitā Sahasranāma* (77)

"A mere glance at her consort Kāmeśvara, she could conceive Gaṇeśa."

Thus the seed of Gaṇeśa entered her mental frame.

III

Now she should give a concrete shape to this. How? Once, she had done intensive *Tapas* (meditation) on Lord Kṛṣṇa, observing a vow called *Puṇyaka*, to get Viṣṇu Himself as her son.

याचैवमूलप्रकृतिरस्याः पुत्रोगणेश्वरः।
कृत्वा कृष्णव्रतं सा च लेभे गणपतिं सुतम्।
स्वांशेन कृष्णो भगवान् बभूव च गणेश्वरः॥

—*Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa (Gaṇeśa Kāṇḍa)*

The Lord had agreed to take birth as her son.

IV

One day, before taking a nude oil-bath, Pārvatī rubbed and removed the oil paste *(Ubaṭana)* externally applied on her body and made a statue out of it; while doing so, she happened to remove

all her shining particles of *Mātṛkās* (sound particles adhered to her during the *Ānanda Tāṇḍava* of Śiva) along with that oil paste. The seed of Gaṇeśa in the form of Viṣṇu lying in her mental frame also got injected in that newly made-statue. Thus with dazzling effulgence, Gaṇeśa had taken birth. But he suffered from two defects. First, certain particles fallen on the ground also got adhered to Him with impurities. Secondly, He had taken birth from the external body surface of the Divine Mother and not from her womb. These defects have culminated in Him in the form of *Ahaṅkāra*. So He became the Lord of *Śūdras* by birth.

विप्राणां दैवतं शंभुः क्षत्रियाणां तु माधवः।
वैश्याणां तु भवेद् ब्रह्मा शूद्राणां गणनायकः।।

"Śiva is the Lord of *Brāhmaṇas,* Viṣṇu of *Kṣatriyas,* Brahmā of *Vaiśyas* and Gaṇapati of *Śūdras."*

So how to remove this *Ahaṅkāra* is another problem. A curse alone can solve such problems—a well-known tradition in the Puranic history.

V

In a certain period of time in the Puranic history, Lord Viṣṇu was cursed by Goddess Lakṣmī (another form of the Divine Mother) on certain occasion, on flimsy grounds of insulting her. So He had to loose His head. But this curse became another boon to the world, and Lord Hayagrīva, the embodiment of knowledge had taken an *Avatāra* as a result of this. Now it was Viṣṇu's turn to teach a lesson to Divine Mother of the impact of such curses, when thoughtlessly and loosely employed without any sense of logic, in the divine kingdom, in particular.

So with the help of Śani, He once again reversed the time-arrow and brought back the curse for rehearsal. He encountered Lord Śiva as Bāla Gaṇeśa, and lost His head. The lamentation of the Divine Mother knew no bounds; and the *Ahaṅkāra* of Bāla Gaṇapati also vanished alongwith this lamentation. (Thereafter, no such 'headless curses' in the history of *Purāṇas*).

VI

Under the influence of *Māyā* (combined form of *Māyās* of both Viṣṇu and Śakti), Gajāsura, a great devotee of Śiva, once begged two boons from Śiva. First, his head should always be present near Him and secondly, Śiva should use his skin to cover His body. The Lord granted both of them. Thus, the head of Gajāsura, an embodiment of Śiva (since with this head, Gajāsura contemplated on Śiva intensively), is surgically joined to the trunk of *Mundakatta Gaṇeśa* by *Aśvin Devatās;* whereas the Lord got the name Krittivāsa by covering His naked body with the skin of an elephant. In different *Purāṇas*, the source of the head is different. But one thing is certain in all, i. e., that head is the meditative head on Lord Śiva in particular).

In the pedestrian path, between Sonprayag and Gaurikund, on the way of Kedarnath, there is an idol of Lord Gaṇeśa, known as *Mundakatta Gaṇeśa.* It is said that the head was severed by Lord Śiva, when Gaṇeśa prevented Him from entering the palace, when Pārvatī was having her bath. The temple is at a steep climb of about three km. from Sonprayag. Near Gaurikund, one can see yellow water spring where Pārvatī had taken bath.

Only elephant's trunk could best represent various forms of *Varṇas* (letters of language), owing to its flexibility, just like Naṭarāja's dance, in an N-dimensional continuum. So is the selection of such a type of head for Gaṇeśa.

VII

वागर्थाविव संपृक्तौ वागर्थप्रतिपत्तये।
जगतः पितरौ वन्दे पार्वतीपरमेश्वरौ।।

— *Kālidāsa's Raghuvaṁsam* (I. 1)

Pārvatī and Parameśvara are like word and its meaning. The medium through which such meaningful expressions propagate in the cosmos, is Gaṇeśa. How did such propagation originate from Gaṇeśa?

The elephant, basically, has its own draw-backs. It is predominant in *Tamoguṇa.* Though very intelligent, it is very slow in

accomplishing certain things.

यथा गजः स्तब्धमतिः स एव।

—*Bhāgavata* (VIII. 4.10)

So Candra, who was sitting on Lord Śiva's head laughed, causing Gaṇeśa to swoon. In a fit of anger, Divine Mother cursed Candra and removed all his fourteen *Kalās* and injected them into the consciousness of Vināyaka with the help of Divine Physicians, the Aśvinī Kumāras. *Kalā* is nothing but a sort of vibration set-up in the consciousness. Thus Gaṇeśa became the central (focal) point in the cosmos as *Bindu*. From this nucleus point emerged all sound-waves in the form of *Nāda*. Thus with the help of *Nāda, Bindu* and *Kalā*, Gaṇeśa attained the highest vibratory state (*Caitanya*) in the cosmos. In fact, His pot- belly is the cosmos and the rat race is the fastest in propagation of micro-sound waves. Now He became *Nṛtta Gaṇapati*. After all, He is the son of a cosmic dancer. The *Bīja* letter 'गं' is attached to Him, since *Gaṁ* means 'that which moves'.

Gaṇeśa had taken all the *Kalās* of the moon on the *Caturdaśī** day, hence no one should see the moon on that day since he is bereft of *Kalās*. Even *Oṣadhis* (herbal plants) have poisonous effect on that day like any other *Grahaṇa* day (eclipse day). Generally, a person should not be seen, when he is devoid of any *Kalā*.

Even Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself was subjected to calumny because of having seen the reflection of the moon on that day in a milk-pot. He could overcome this by getting *Syamantakamaṇi* as well as Jāmbavatī as His wife, after a long fight with Jāmbavān. Is fight not a necessary evil to overcome the difficulties? The recitation of the following *Śloka* nullifies the evil effect of seeing the moon on that day.

सिंहः प्रसेनमवधीत् सिंहो जाम्बवता हतः।
सुकुमारक! मा रोदीस्तव ह्येष स्यमन्तकः।।

VIII

There is a close relation between Gaṇeśa and the element of the earth, since some of the particles of the earth were infused in His

* It is not in accordance with the *Purāṇas*.

body during His initial stages of formation (having His origin in the dirt of *Śakti)*. That is why He selected His place for sleep in the earthly place of *Mūlādhāra* of *Kuṇḍalinī,* where he sleeps in *Yoganidrā,* coiling His trunk.

गुदाद् द्व्यङ्गुलमूर्ध्वं तु लिङ्गादेकाङ्गुलादयः।
मूलाधारस्त्रिकोणाभं चतुर्दलसरोरुहम्।।
वशषसाक्षरैर्युक्तं लसदोङ्कारकर्णिकम्।
तत्रस्थं वल्लभीरम्यं गणेश्वरमुपास्महे।।

"I meditate upon Gaṇeśa, who gladdens His consort Vallabhī seated in the triangle in *Mūlādhāra,* within the *Praṇava* pericarped four-petalled lotus, the four petals inscribed with the four letters *Va-Śa-Ṣa* and *Sa"*.

There is a temple for Gaṇapati in the *Mūlādhāra Kṣetra* of Tiruvarur, which was consecrated by saint Agastya.

Gaṇapati, the God of sound, is appropriately enough extolled in the *Pāga Haṁsadhvani* by Śrī Muthuswāmī Dīkṣitāra *(Vātāpi Gaṇapatiṁ Bhaje). Haṁsa* is not only the Swan, but the natural sound ever immanent in sentient beings. *Jñāna Siddhi Āgama* speaks of Gaṇapati as *Kuṇḍalinī-Haṁsa Niḥsvanaḥ.*

Once *Kuṇḍalinī* rises, one can hear the sound waves and also the corresponding colour scheme while it passes through different *Cakras* which are in the shape of lotuses. The whole scene looks like Gajendra—

अभ्यगमदाशु यतो गजेन्द्रः।

—*Bhāgavata* (VIII. 3. 31)

"Holding up its trunk with a lotus and raised in the sky."

Gaṇapati is also the God of music. Tyāgarāja refers to Gaṇapati (*Gajamukkulu*) as *Nādopāsaka* in his songs *Vidulaku, 'vināyakuni valanu brovave'* (protect me as Thou dost Vināyaka).

This close affinity between Gaṇeśa and the earth-element is the main reason, why Gaṇeśa's idols are made of mud and again dissolved in water during the festivals. He likes the *Dūrvā* grass on the same grounds, as it grows on the earth and emits the sweet smell of mud.

IX

The following universal *Śloka* on Gaṇeśa, commonly recited in every home—

शुक्लाम्बरधरं विष्णुं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम्।
प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत्सर्वविघ्नोपशान्तये।।

'शुक्लाम्बरधरम्' (He who is attired pure white), 'विष्णुम्' (the all pervading), 'शशिवर्णम्' (He who is the cool, pure hue of the moon), 'चतुर्भुजम्' (the four-armed), 'प्रसन्नवदनम्' (whose gracious face is beaming with smile) gives a clear picture of Viṣṇu rather than Gaṇeśa. Here Viṣṇu is seen in terms of Gaṇeśa and vice-versa. Since, Gaṇeśa is the incarnation of Viṣṇu, He played certain pranks and never allowed Vibhīṣaṇa to take Viṣṇu's original idol from Bharat to Lanka. Thus is the birth of Shrirangam, the *Bhūloka Vaikuṇṭha* for Vaishnavites.

The earliest reference we have about Gaṇapati is in the *Ṛgveda*—

गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे
कविं कवीनामुपम श्रवस्तमम्।
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत
आ नः शृण्वन्नूतिभिः सीद सादनम्॥

(II. 23. 1)

Here, too, no reference is made with reference to his elephantine head. He is 'कविं कवीनां' (the seer of seers and poet of poets, God of wisdom par excellence).

We are beings on the earth. Whatever be the idol made on this planet, will definitely contain one way or the other some amount of the earth-element. In other words, Gaṇapati is a common factor in all deities, if they are worshipped on the surface of the earth, using idols and *Mantras* (sound system). So, one should pacify this common element first, and then the corresponding deity present in this idol. In other words, Gaṇeśa is to be worshipped first. In fact, there is no *Pūjā*, no *Yajña*, no *Japa* without offering prayers to Gaṇapati, to begin with.

As per the association of that corresponding deity, Gaṇeśa gets

His name. For example, Lakṣmī Gaṇapati, Sarasvatī Gaṇapati, Mahā Gaṇapati, Ucchiṣṭa Gaṇapati and so on and so forth.

देवा तूंचि गणेशु। सकलमतिप्रकाशु। हें शब्दब्रह्म अशेष। तेचि मूर्ति सुवेष। तेथ वर्णवपु निर्दोष।· · · · · · स्मृति तेचि अवयव। अष्टादश पुराणें। तींचि मणिभूषणें।· · · · · · उपरि दशोपनिषदें। जियें उदारें ज्ञानमकरंदें । तियें कुसुमें मुगुटीं सुगंधें । भोमती भलीं। अकार चरणयुगुल। उकार उदर विशाल। मकार महामण्डल। मस्तकाकारें । तेथें शब्दब्रह्म कवललें।

—*Jñāneśvara's Jñāneśvarī* (Opening/Benedictory Stanza)

"O God ! Thou art Gaṇeśa, the illuminator of intelligence.... the *Vedas* in their perfection represent Your beautiful image, of which the flawless words (orthography) are the resplendent body, the *Smṛtis* are the very limbs, the *Purāṇas* are the jewelled ornaments, the fine metrical form is the colourful garment, the epic poems are jingling bells, the fragrant flowers of *Upaniṣads* depict the crown on the head; the *A* of the *Om* is the feet, *U* is the large belly, and *M* is the great circle of the head. I salute Thee, the primordial cause of beings, the *Om.*"

Vedas are also called *Śrutis* (sound system). Gaṇapati Himself is *Śabdabrahma. Mantra* should follow Gaṇeśa and not vice-versa. When Gaṇeśa Himself is an embodiment of knowledge, how can He write literary compositions, taking the help of other external instruments? So He requested Paraśurāma (the great devotee of Śiva) to cut His right tusk (with an axe, given by *Mahā Deva)* which He used in writing the great epic *Mahābhārata,* as dictated by the great sage Veda Vyāsa. In exchange of love and gratitude for this task, He showed all the fourteen worlds to Paraśurāma, by lifting him sky-high with His trunk. The pride of an elephant is in its tusks and it takes care to keep them bright and sharp. Vināyaka demonstrated that no personal sacrifice is too much in the cause of spreading the knowledge of truth, beauty, bliss and *Jñāna*.

There is a village called Mana, four kms from Badari. It is the northern most village in India. On the left bank of the river Sarasvatī, close to Mana is Vyāsa Guhā. Close by this is Gaṇeśa Guhā. It is said that this is the sacred place where Gaṇeśa had written the entire epic *Mahābhārata.* Here rocks are also seen in

the shape of layers of paper or palm leaves piled one over the other, which is said to represent the works of sage Veda Vyāsa.

X

Bharat (India) looks like a *Śivaliṅga* when it is viewed from the peak of Gaṅgotrī in the Himalayas. To get this picture clear, one should see the map of India upside-down, where the South India looks like a *Śivaliṅga* and the river Gaṅgā as its *Yoni* part. The Himalayan belt appears as the foundation stone on which this *Śivaliṅga* is erected. Divine Mother occupies the left part of this *Liṅga*. On Divine Mother's lap Lord Gaṇeśa sits in a comfortable position. Apart from this, even the Mother's thighs look like the trunk of an elephant.

करीन्द्राणां शुण्डान्।

—*Saundaryalaharī* (82)

"Thy thighs subdue by their beauty the trunk of lordly elephants."

The state of Maharashtra occupies this thigh position. So it is famous for the Gaṇeśa's cult. In fact, it is the origin for *Gaṇeśa Sampradāya.* There are eight famous temples of Vināyaka, well-known as *Aṣṭa Vināyaka.*

स्वस्ति श्रीगणनायकं गजमुखं मोरेश्वरं सिद्धिदम्।
बल्लालं मुरुलं विनायकमठं चिंतामणिं थेवरम्।।
लेण्याद्रिं गिरिजात्मजं सुवरदं विघ्नेश्वरं ओझरम्।
ग्रामे रांजणसंस्थितो गणपतिः कुर्यात् सदा मंगलम्।।

They are—Mayūreśvara of Morgaon, Siddhivināyaka of Siddhatek, Ballāleśvara of Pali, Varada Vināyaka of Mahad, Cintāmaṇi of Theur, Girijātmaja of Lenyadri, Vighneśvara of Ozar, and Mahā Gaṇapati of Ranjangaon.

"Till today nobody has visited all these eight temples in a single day trip,though they are somewhat near to each other. This is an unsolved mystery in the history of Gaṇeśa.

The first and foremost one is the Mayūreśvara of Morgaon. The *Gaṇeśa Sampradāya* system first originated from this place by one Śrī Gaṇeśa Yogīndra. A manuscript of the *Mudgala*

Purāṇa (Mudgala is the *Ṛṣi* for *Gaṇapati Mantra)* of Śrī Gaṇeśa Yogīndra is still preserved in the *Maṭha* of Mayūreśvara. This *Purāṇa* was handed over to him originally by Gaṇeśa Himself. It is the main source from which the different schools of *Gaṇāpatyam* originated. The term *Gaṇapati Bappā Morayā* reverberates in the amphitheatres of Gaṇeśa in the state of Maharashtra, especially during *Gaṇeśa Caturthī* festivals every year (*Bappa* means father).

In the *Pañcāyatana Pūjā* (worship of the five), Gaṇapati is placed in the centre and the rest all around Him in the following order—Viṣṇu, Śiva, Sūrya, and Devī. This order of location is enunciated in the *Nirṇayasindhu.* The river Sona flowing into the Gaṅgā abounds in red *Sonabhadra* stones which are worshipped as Gaṇapati in the *Pañcāyatana Pūjā.*

The *Ṣaṇmatas* established by Ādi Śaṅkara comprises *Gāṇapatyam* (faith of Gaṇapati), *Kaumāram* (faith of Kumāra), *Vaiṣṇavam* (faith of Viṣṇu), *Sauram* (faith of Sūrya), *Śāktam* (faith of *Śakti)* and *Śaivam* (faith of Śiva). Here again Gaṇapati is in the first row.

XI

Once Śiva and Pārvatī conducted a test on Gaṇeśa and Kumāra. The one who returned first after going around the three worlds would get the fruits, namely *Siddhi* and *Buddhi.* Though Subramanya used his fast flight vehicle peacock, Gaṇapati could succeed in the test by reciting the *Śiva Pañcākṣarī Mantra* and going around His parents, namely Śiva and Pārvatī. Thus He got *Siddhi* and *Buddhi* as fruits.

XII

The emission of venomous poison, the sinking of the Meru, and other such things made the *Devas* to realise that they had not worshipped Lord Vināyaka, at the commencement of churning the milky ocean. So they made an idol of Vināyaka with the help of foam particles and worshipped it. This Vināyaka known as 'Vellai Pillaiar (Vellai—white, Pillaiar—Vināyaka) is at Tiruvalanchuzhi, Tamil Nadu. It is very near to Swāmīmalai temple. This is the only

white idol (*Vigraha)* with the trunk turned right, in India.

The biggest Gaṇeśa image in India lies at Chidambaram, in the outer *Prākāra* of Naṭarāja temple. During the *Ānanda Tāṇḍava* of Naṭarāja, the gods, the *Ṛṣis,* and devotees like Patañjali and Vyāghrapāda were allowed to witness the same. This *Mukkuruni Vināyagar's* job was to absorb all the sound waves released from the *Ḍamarū* of the Lord Naṭarāja, during His *Ānanda Tāṇḍava. Mukkuruni* is a single large measure of rice, out of which a single *Modaka* is prepared for *Naivedya* (offering). Hence the name Mukkuruni Vināyakar (kindly note this *Tāṇḍava* of Śiva is after the birth of Vināyaka, not as stated in the part II of this essay).

An idol of Gaṇapati was installed before His Mother *Akhilanandeśvarī* by Ādi Śaṅkara, in Tiruvanaikka Temple (Jambukeśvara near Srirangam) to remove the *Ugra Kalā* (ferocious-aspect) of the Divine Mother. *Ugra-Kalā* comes in the form of lightning radiations. Only Gaṇapati can absorb such sounds, not others.

Let us worship Vināyaka alongwith His Mother as the sole succour in this *Kali Yuga.*

कलौ चण्डीविनायकौ।

परं धाम परं ब्रह्म परेशं परमीश्वरम्।
विघ्ननिघ्नकरं शान्तं पुष्टं कान्तमनन्तकम्॥
सुरासुरेन्द्रैः सिद्धेन्द्रैः स्तुतं स्तौमि परात्परम्।
सुरपद्मदिनेशं च गणेशं मंगलायनम्॥

"I pray to Lord Gaṇeśa who is the final abode, *Brahma* the absolute, Lord Supreme, destroyer of obstructions, tranquil of mind, healthy, charming and endless; whom the leading gods, demons and *Siddhas* praise and offer their prayers to; who is like sun to the lotus-like gods and who is the abode of auspiciousness."

—*Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*

Gaṇeśa in Vedic Lore

—*Swami Shivanand*

Śrī Gaṇeśa is perhaps the most important among the deities of the Hindu pantheon. He is also the most loved and respected of gods by all the Hindus at large. Besides He is regarded as the master of the masses and elites, which is apparent from His name Gaṇapati and it is such since the time of antiquity.

The *Vedas* are the oldest available literature of the world. In them also we find Him conspicuously existent.

In *Ṛgveda Śākala Saṁhitā* we come across a sacred hymn—

गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे
कविं कवीनामुपम श्रवस्तमम्।
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत
आ नः शृण्वन्नूतिभिः सीद सादनम्॥

(II. 23. 1)

It means "Oh Lord, who are the master of all deities, who are the best among all poets, who are the most beloved son of Śiva-Pārvatī and who are the bestower of all happiness and enjoyment, we sing in praise of You. Oh Lord,be benevolent enough to appear as our saviour and be seated here with us.

There is no scope of doubt that this beloved son of Śiva-Pārvatī is Śrī Gaṇeśa.

This very hymn is found in *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* (II. 3. 4. 3). In *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* we find two words 'ज्येष्ठराज' and 'वत्सराज' which are applied for Kārtika and Gaṇeśa. In different *Vedas* the word 'ज्येष्ठराज' is of extreme importance. Firstly the word indicates Gaṇeśa as the elder brother of Kārtikeya. Secondly as explained by M. M. Gaṇapati Śāstrī by quoting the following *Veda-Mantra*—

वत्सराज: वालश्चासौ राजा च वत्सराज:। ....गणपतिर्हि अस्य ज्येष्ठो ज्येष्ठराज इति वेदे व्यपदिष्ट:। यत: कनिष्ठ औचित्याद् वत्सराज इति व्यपदिश्यते।

That it gives a clear indication that their parents are Śiva and Pārvatī, because Gaṇeśa actually is the elder brother of Kārtika.

In *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda—Maitrāyaṇīya Saṁhitā* we find—

तत्कराटाय विद्महे हस्तिमुखाय धीमहि तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्।

(II. 9. 1)

This is the *Gāyatrī Mantra* of Śrī Gaṇeśa. In *Vedas* various descriptions of Śrī Gaṇeśa are seen describing Gaṇeśa as having an elephant-face.

In *Atharva Veda—Śaunaka Saṁhitā* there is a *Mantra*—

एकदन्ताय विद्महे वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्।

This *Mantra* is also found in *Gaṇapatyupaniṣad* of the *Atharva Veda*. Gaṇeśa is Ekadanta the one with a single tusk, according to a Puranic lore. The lore runs thus—

Once Lord Viṣṇu took an incarnation to teach a lesson to the *Kṣatriyas* (the ruling class) who became highly haughty and arrogant. After taking birth as a human being He pleased Lord Śiva with penance and obtained a divine axe (परशु) from Him. Hence He was known as Paraśurāma. With that axe he waged wars against all the erring kings and in this way he destroyed all of them as many as twenty-one times and saved the world from their atrocities.

After fulfilling his desires, out of gratitude, he went to Kailasa, the abode of Lord Śiva to pay obeisance to Him. At that time Gaṇeśa was guarding the entrance of His father and He did not allow Paraśurāma to enter Śiva's chamber. Being refused entrance Paraśurāma (as he was hot-tempered all the time) hit the tusk of Gaṇeśa and broke it. Hearing His cry Śiva-Pārvatī appeared on the scene and chastised Paraśurāma. Of course there are other legends, also for His being Ekadanta.

In *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (तैत्तिरीय आरण्यक) another *Gāyatrī Mantra* of Gaṇeśa is found—

तत्पुरुषाय विद्महे वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्।

The terms 'वक्रतुण्ड' and 'दन्ती' refer to Gaṇeśa. The name *Dantī* also

suggests the elephant face of Gaṇeśa. We find the following *Mantra* in *Śukla Yajurveda*—

नमो गणेभ्यो गणपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो व्रातेभ्यो व्रातपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो। नमो गृत्सेभ्यो गृत्सपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो विरूपेभ्यो विश्वरूपेभ्यश्च वो नमः॥

(16.25)

We pay obeisance to Gaṇeśa who is the leader of the lesser gods, we pay our respect to Viśvanātha, Mahā Kāleśvara etc., as they are the names of Gaṇapati in different contexts. We salute the leader of gods' assembly, protector of all intelligentsia and we also bow down our head to one who reveals himself through whatever is visible in the universe.

Then again the Vedic deity 'ब्रह्मणस्पति' is no other than Gaṇeśa as is seen in the following *Mantra*—

विघ्नेश विधिमार्तण्ड चन्देन्द्रोपेन्द्रवन्दित।
नमो गणपते तुभ्यं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पते।।

Oh the controller of all impediments Gaṇapati, You are worshipped by the Brahmā, the sun-god, the moon god, Indra and Lord Viṣṇu also.

In *Vedas*,very often, we find Gaṇeśa has been nomenclatured as Brahmaṇaspati. There are many couplets in practically all the *Vedas*, adoring Gaṇeśa as Brahmaṇaspati.

In *Ṛgveda*, for instance the *Śloka*—

न तमंहो न दुरितं कुतश्चन नारातयस्तितिरुर्न द्वयाविनः।
विश्वा इदस्माद् ध्वरसो वि बाधसे यं सुगोपा रक्षसि ब्रह्मणस्पते।।

(II. 23. 5)

Oh Brahmaṇaspati, neither any mishap nor any sin can even touch one, whom You protect. No enemy can inflict any harm to him nor any evil action can have any effect on him. On the contrary, You destroy them who think or act that way.

One of the names given to Gaṇeśa is Ekadanta. *Ṛgveda Mantra* (X. 155. 2) reads—

चत्तो इतश्चत्तामुतः सर्वा भ्रूणान्यारुषी।
अराय्यं ब्रह्मणस्पते तीक्ष्णशृङ्गोदृषन्निहि।।

Those who destroy medicinal plants and a foetus get perished.

Oh Brahmaṇaspati, You destroy all these ill-omened persons with Your dreadful tusk.

In the *Sāma Veda* the following line occurs—

प्रैत ब्रह्मणस्पतिः प्र देव्येतु सूनृता।

(*Āgneya Parva* I. 56)

We cordially welcome Brahmaṇaspati and goddess of learning, Sarasvatī to appear in the place of sacrifice.

It is to be marked here that both Gaṇapati and Sarasvatī have been welcomed as they are brother and sister.

In *Yajurveda* we find the following line—

रक्षा णो ब्रह्मणस्पते।

(III. 30)

Oh Brahmaṇaspati, be our saviour. In *Atharva Veda*—

यौ व्याघ्रावववरूढौ जिघत्सतः पितरं मातरं च।
तौ दन्तौ ब्रह्मणस्पते शिवौ कृणु जातवेदः।।

(VI. 140. 1)

Oh Brahmaṇaspati, we pray to You that the two sets of teeth (upper and lower) of a human child which may be ready to harm his parents like that of a cub, be beneficial for them.

However it is clear from the hymns and *Mantras* cited above that Lord Gaṇeśa is a Vedic deity and it is also clear that though many deities are worshipped by the Hindus, Lord Gaṇeśa occupies a place of pride among them and also He has a special place of affection in the hearts of His worshippers which is proved by the fact that no worship of any other deity can begin without an initial worship to Gaṇeśa.

The *Yogī* does all actions for self purification through body, speech, mind and senses, giving up every mundane hope and a person devoid of *Yoga*, does everything for its pleasurable fruits and so he is shackled by the seeds of actions and eventually suffers miseries.

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (IV. 10-11)

Gaṇeśa: The Power Supreme

—Dr. V. Ramamurthy Renu

मातामह महाशैलं महस्तदपितामहम्।
कारणं जगतां वन्दे कण्ठादुपरिवारणम्।।

I bow down before that power supreme (महः) possessing the shape of an elephant over and above his neck, the cause for the worlds, who has the great mountain (Himavān) as grandfather on mother's side and no grandfather at all on father's side.

Gaṇeśa or Gaṇapati, literally meaning, the lord of hosts or multitudes, was a very significant well-recognised and universally venerated name in the Hindu pantheon as well as spiritual world. Iconographically, it is a rare combination of animal (elephant head) and human-torso, popularly called Gajānana or Gajavadana.

Indian *Sanātana Dharma*, has had no beginning and hence no end too. It started with the creation of universe nay, even before that. It has for its edifice the *Vedas* (ancient scriptures) considered as the very breath of the Power Supreme 'यस्य निःश्वसितं वेदाः'. Therefore the word Gaṇapati must figure in them, for its accountability and credibility as an epithet for *Brahma*, the Absolute power. Examined from this angle, we find references for the words *Gaṇapati* and *Dantin* (tusker) in the Vedic texts. The earliest of the *Vedas*, *Ṛgveda* declares—

गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे
कविं कवीनामुपमश्रवस्तमम्।
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत
आ नः श्रृण्वन्नूतिभिः सीद सादनम्।।

(II. 23. 1)

O lord of actions (ब्रह्मणस्पते), lord of multitudes like *Vidyādhara*

Deva hordes (गणानां गणपति:), the knower of the past, present and future(कवीनां कवि:),the possessor of food in plenty, (उपमश्रवस्तमम्), the seniormost among the kings and Lord of powerful mystic syllables (ब्रह्मणां), we invoke you with our prayers, pleased by them, kindly come on to our altars and hearts, with your protective powers (ऊतिभि:) and be seated.

Here the word 'ब्रह्मणस्पति' for Gaṇapati was interpreted by commentators as Bṛhaspati or Vācaspati, the preceptor of *Devatās*, as the lord of the *Mantras* and actions 'कर्मणां पति:'. This again suggests that He was the lord of word (sound, speech etc.,) the very form of Power Supreme i.e., the mystic syllable *Om* as attested by Patañjali in his *Yoga Sūtras* 'तस्य वाचक: प्रणव:' (I. 27). It is very purposeful to note here the statement of *Śruti*—"तस्माद्वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाश: सम्भूत:। आकाशाद्वायु:" and so on (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* II. 1.1). The entire universe emerged from *Ākāśa* i.e., sound (शब्दगुणकमाकाश:) the primordial syllable *Om*. And Gaṇeśa was often hailed as the very form of *Praṇava* (प्रणवस्वरूपं वक्रतुण्डम्) by Śrī Muttuswāmī Dīkṣita, and Vakratuṇḍa i. e., 'वक्रमात्मरूपं तुण्डं मुखं यस्य'. To understand and comprehend *Ātmā*, is beyond the reach and capacity of speech and mind 'यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह'. This is further clarified in the following *Śloka*, explaining God as Gajamukha—

कण्ठाधोमाययायुक्तं मस्तकं ब्रह्मवाचकम्।
वक्राख्यं येन विघ्नेशस्तेनायं वक्रतुण्डक:।।

The head part stands for *Brahma*, and the lower portion represents the phenomenal universe. Hence this manifestation of God is called Gajavadana or Vakratuṇḍa. Here the oft-quoted dictum of *Veda* must be borne in mind that the Supreme is one, wise men explain it in many ways'एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति'.

It is universally agreed, that the *Gāyatrī Mantra* represents the Absolute Supreme and there are various forms of *Gāyatrī*. We find unmistakable reference to the elephant-faced *Brahma* in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* which speaks of God as *Dantin* (tusker). And the *Gāyatrī* pertaining to Gaṇapati runs thus—

तत्पुरुषाय विद्महे वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्।

"Let the Tusker direct our thoughts"

Thus the antiquity of the Gaṇeśa, Gaṇapati or Gajavadana cult was established by the Vedic texts.

Gaṇapati Literature—

By the time of *Purāṇas* and *Itihāsas*, the practice of worshipping Gaṇapati as the Absolute *Brahma* in a variety of forms and names, has been established, with abundant literature. He was considered a benignant God, beyond whom there was no overlord or leader (Vināyaka) an important object of worship for *Gāṇapatas*. Some of the basic texts of this school are *Gaṇapatyupaniṣat, Heramba Upaniṣad, Mudgala Purāṇam, Gaṇeśagītā, Gaṇeśa Tantra, Gaṇeśa Kalpa, Brahma Purāṇa, Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, Gaṇeśa Purāṇa,* portions of *Skanda Purāṇa* etc.

The entire universe being the manifestation of the Absolute, Gaṇapati was rightly termed as the overlord of multitudes of the different (84 lakhs) species in creation, besides enjoying the lordship of Śiva's *Bhūtagaṇas, Deva, Asura* and *Pramatha Gaṇas*. This Supreme status was conferred on Him by Śiva Himself. It is strange to note, that being considered the son of Śiva and Pārvatī, He was worshipped by them, at the time of their marriage. The vast *Gāṇapata* literature, throws a flood of light on a number of aspects of Gaṇeśa both as a *Nirguṇa* (attributeless) *Brahma* and *Saguṇa* divinity with various names, forms, colours, qualities etc.

Vighneśa Vighnahara—the Paratattva—

Priority was accorded to the worship of Gaṇapati over all other gods during all the auspicious functions, the sixteen *Saṁskāras* (ritual) starting from the birth of a Hindu; during military expeditions, and secular adventures. His blessings were sought for the successful completion of the undertakings, removing all sorts of possible interruptions, in the process. He is at once the lord of obstacles, their controller and remover. What is *Vighna* or obstacle ? It is a factor of time and therefore an aspect of God, "विशेषेण जगत्सामर्थ्यं हन्तीति विघ्नः". That which eliminates or puts a halt to the creative, protective

and destructive powers of universe (divine powers) is a *Vighna*, and Gaṇapati being the lord of *Vighnas*, naturally deserves the first *Pūjā*. He is said to manifest himself in different forms in the four ages (*Yugas*) in accordance with their nature. In *Kṛtayuga* (*Satya Yuga*) He was Vināyaka, with lustrous form and ten hands riding a lion, in *Tretā Yuga*, He was called Mayūreśa, white in colour, with six arms riding on a peacock. This Mayūreśa is the presiding deity of Mayūra Grāma (Moregaon) in Maharashtra (India). His incarnation in *Dvāpara Yuga* was the four-armed Gajānana (elephant-faced) in crimson colour with the mouse as mount. The smoke coloured *Dhūmraketu* with two arms riding a horse, is the presiding Lord in *Kaliyuga*.

Generally we come across Gaṇeśa idols and icons as per the stipulations of the *Āgama Śāstras,* seated on a mouse with four arms carrying a noose (पाश), a goad (अंकुश), a broken tusk (दंत) and a sweet ball (मोदक). He is considered the 'ईश्वरतत्त्व विनायक' inseparable from Śiva and as the symbol of *Praṇava* 'ॐ', the sound Supreme silence. He is pure knowledge and is in charge of the gross world of Nature. The *Pañcakṛtya* (पञ्चकृत्य) namely, creation, preservation, destruction, great deception (तिरोधान) and *Anugraha* (boon-giving) liberation, associated with the Power-Supreme (Śiva and Śakti), were attributed to the noose, broken-tusk, goad, trunk (touch and smell organ) and *Modaka* respectively. His *Sindūra*-red form shines all the more, in the exuding ichor (मदजल) from His cheeks, neck and privities which three signify, *Sat* (Knowledge of existence), *Cit* (aesthetic comprehension) and *Ānanda* (the spiritual bliss). Of all the colours infra-red is considered the most non-disturbing one, maintaining balance and harmony (सामरस्य), a benign quality of the Supreme (परतत्त्व).

Among the various *Upaniṣads*, describing the various forms of Godhead, according to the perceptions of the seers and *Gaṇapati Atharvaśīrṣa Upaniṣad* declares Gaṇapati as the Supreme Truth (पर तत्त्व). It runs—

ॐ नमस्ते गणपतये। त्वमेव केवलं कर्तासि, त्वमेव केवलं धर्तासि, त्वमेव केवलं हर्तासि। त्वमेव सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्मासि —त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं तत्त्वमसि—।

The mysteries of the universe, a creation of the inexplicable *Brahma*, cannot be comprehended by the mundane tests of perception (प्रत्यक्ष) or inference (अनुमान). Only *Śāstras*, (*Vedas*) can help the genuine truth-seeker in unfolding the glory of God (शास्त्र समधिगम्यम्). The *Saguṇa* form of Godhead for the devotees is that of Gajavadana. Commentators explain the *Gaja* conception thus—"समाधिना योगिनो यत्र गच्छन्ति इति 'ग:' यस्माद् बिंबप्रतिबिम्बतया प्रणवात्मकं जगज्जायते इति ज:।"

The final resort of the *Yogīs* in trance (the place where the finite self gets merged into the infinite) is indicated by the letter 'ग' and the point from which ('ॐ' syllable representing the Absolute) the phenomenal creation, with names, forms, space, time etc., emerges, is indicated by the letter 'ज'. Thus the upper portion—elephant head stands for the power supreme whereas its inferior and mortal counterpart below (the fleeting universe), is represented by human torso. When the *Śruti* says—"त्वमेव तत्त्वमसि", we can understandably split the sentence thus—"तत्=गज+त्वम्=नर+असि". That is the unmanifest (अव्यक्त) part of *Brahma* and the manifest (सोपाधिक) part, are both one and the same. Their merger and inseparability are indicated by the word 'असि' which stands for the cementing Bliss 'अखंडैकरस'.

Now some of the apparent oddities and incongruities in the physical form of Gaṇeśa, need clarification for the real appreciation of the cult. Besides the epithets Gajamukha and Vakratuṇḍa, He is called Ekadanta, Ākhuvāhana (rider on mouse) Śūrpakarṇa (having broad ears) and Lambodara (pot bellied) also, which names throw light on some super-potentialities associated with the Absolute. Gaṇapati holds one tusk, symbolising His control over illusion (माया) which he deploys in revealing (आविर्भाव) and concealing (तिरोधान), of the universe. The *Mudgala Purāṇa* says—

एकशब्दात्मिका* माया तस्यास्सर्वं समुद्भवम्।
दन्तः सत्ताधरस्तत्र मायाचालक उच्यते॥

*अजामेकां लोहित शुक्ल कृष्णाम्।—*Śruti*

He rides on a mouse (मूषक) which symbolises sharp-intellect (कुशाग्रबुद्धि) and power to steal (remove) the sins and actions of beings, accrued during their previous births. As the Soul-infinite (परमात्मा) and all pervading, He stays in the heart-cavities (हृदय कुहर) of His devotees removing their sins, even as a mouse penetrates into the unknown depths stealthily consuming the hidden grains. *Śāstra* says—

ईश्वरस्सर्वभोक्ता च चोरवत्तत्रसंस्थितः।
स एव मूषकः प्रोक्तो मनुजानां प्रचालकः।।

He is Śūrpakarṇa, with broad ears always moving forward and backward, as though winnowing the accumulated actions of His devotees, retaining the grains and rejecting the chaff, thus bestowing on them liberation.

रजोयुक्तं यथा धान्यं रजोहीनं करोति च।
शूर्पं सर्वनराणां वै योग्यं भोजनकाम्यया।।
शूर्पकर्णं समाश्रित्य त्यक्त्वा मलविकारकम्।
ब्रह्मैव नर जातिस्थो भवेत्तेन तथा स्मृतः।।

(*Mudgala Purāṇa*)

With a lopsided belly quite disproportionate to His short stature, Lord Gaṇeśa causes laughter. But the truth is, His all encompassing belly, enshrines all the worlds in it giving them shelter and protection and releasing them at the time of re-creating. *Śāstra* is eloquent on this point—

तस्योदरात्समुत्पन्नंनानाविश्वं न संशयः।

That Gaṇeśa is the Supreme Godhead, is declared in unequivocal terms in the *Gaṇeśa Uttara Tāpinyupaniṣad*—

ॐ गणेशो वै ब्रह्म तद्विद्यात्। यदिदंकिञ्च सर्वं भूतं भव्यं जायमानं च तत्सर्वमित्याचक्षते।

Pañcadevopāsanā and Gaṇapati—

We should remember that it is not without significance, that Gaṇeśa stands connected in some relationship or the other with other Gods namely Śiva, Pārvatī, Śakti, Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Skanda, according to several scriptures. A careful eye can perceive in them one central connecting truth, a link, even as a concealed thread running through, beads in a rosary. Śiva and Pārvatī, the divine couple, are His parents. Viṣṇu is looked upon as the brother of Pārvatī whereas Sūrya was equated with *Nārāyaṇa* (ध्येयः सदा

सवितृमण्डल मध्यवर्ती नारायण:). Skanda or Kumāra was his younger brother. And the attributes attached to each one of them in their relevant literatures, are one and the same—viz., luminaries of *Sat, Cit, Ānanda,* omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, the one without a second and so on.

Much is said about the personal God and the impersonal Absolute—about God with attributes and without attributes. It is only when all the colours in the light mix together, we get the colourless rays of the sun. Even so, by the very virtue of being the abode of many attributes, God becomes attributeless (निर्गुण). The nature and individual tastes differ from person to person, in accordance with the proportions of the five elements of which their bodies are formed.'That is why, even the great realised souls, who enjoy oneness with the impersonal God in all objects, still like to contemplate on a personal God with attributes, of their choice. To cater to the needs of such devotees, who form the majority, the *Pañcadevopāsanā* or *Pañcāyatana Pūjā* system, was introduced and practised from times immemorial. The gods representing the five elements are—"आदित्यमम्बिकां विष्णुं गणनाथं महेश्वरम्"— Sun, Devī (Mother), Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa and Śiva. And the elements they rule over are—

आकाशस्याधिपो विष्णुरग्नेश्चैवमहेश्वरी।
वायोः सूर्यः क्षितेरीशो जीवनस्य गणाधिपः।।

That is, Viṣṇu is the lord of *Ākāśa* (ether). Maheśvarī (Śakti) rules over fire, Sun represents wind, Śiva the earth and Gaṇeśa stands for water the elixir of life. Our bodies are the mysterious combinations of these elements. Some of us love, by instinct, Śiva, some Viṣṇu, some Śakti, some Sūrya and others Gaṇeśa. Even though all the bodies are a mixture of these elements, yet the predominance of a particular element in a particular body, accounts for his special taste for that corresponding God.

As a spiritual discipline, the worship of one's chosen form of the Godhead—which is the concept of *Iṣṭadevatā*—is indispensable for one's progress towards enlightenment.The

Mantrayoga Saṁhitā supports this view clearly—

मानवानां प्रकृतयः पञ्चधा परिकीर्तिताः।
यतो निरूप्यते सर्गः पञ्चभूतात्मकोर्बुधैः।।
भिन्ना यद्यपि भूतानां प्रकृतिः प्रकृतेर्वशात्।
तथापिपञ्चतत्त्वानामनुसारेण तत्ववित्।।
प्रत्येकतत्त्वप्राचुर्यं विमृश्यविधिपूर्वकम्।
उपासनाधिकारस्य पञ्चभेदमवर्णयत्।।

(*Mantrayoga Saṁhitā*)

It is the duty of the expert-preceptor (तत्त्ववित्) to guess the nature of his disciple, by his intuitive powers, and prescribe the right form of *Iṣṭadevatā,* from among the five gods. However, the best prayer is that, which asks God to dower the entire world with His blessings, since the devotee is expected to look upon the mankind as one. This system of *Pañcāyatana Pūjā* insists on respect for all the gods, with a slight preferential tilt towards the form of one's choice. And that form of *Iṣṭadevatā* should be installed centrally at the altar, with the remaining four occupying the four corners around.

One peculiarity about this *Pūjā* system is, that eventhough the personal marks of these five divinities are well defined, they are not worshipped in those forms, but are represented in symbols. This is an intermediary stage in idol-worship, between the form and the formless. Because the symbols are certain kinds of rock formations, therefore they have a form, yet they are formless as they don't have organs like face, hands, feet etc. In this *Devārādhana* Śiva is worshipped as *Bāṇaliṅga* (बाणलिङ्ग) found abundantly in the Narmadā river (Oṁkāra Kuṇḍa), Viṣṇu as a *Śālagrāma* available in the bed of river Gaṇḍakī (Nepal) Sūrya as a crystal found in Vallam in Tamilnadu, Ambikā (Śakti) is worshipped in the form of *Svarṇamukhī* stone, found in the river Svarṇamukhī near Kalahasti in Andhra Pradesh, and Gaṇeśa is represented in red stone *Śoṇabhadra* (शोणभद्र) found at the confluence of river Sone and the Gaṅgā in Bihar.* This tradition of worship throws a flood of light

* Courtesy—A discourse on *Bhakti* by His Holiness Late Śrī Śrī Śrī Paramācārya Candraśekharendra Sarasvatī, Śaṅkarācārya of *Kāñcī Kāmakoṭi Maṭha.*

on the notion of National unity and cultural integrity of Bhāratavarṣa through religion, which speaks volumes about the *'Sarvajīvasama dṛṣṭi'* of our ancestors. To acquire these holy stones, an ardent devotee, had necessarily to trek the entire country, and in the process broaden his outlook on life shedding all petty parochial weaknesses. The great consolidator of *Sanātana Dharma*, Ādya Śaṅkara Bhagavatpādācārya was a staunch advocate of this liberal *Pūjā* system.

The traditional annual celebrations of *Gaṇeśa Caturthī,* are observed on the fourth day of the bright fortnight, in the month of *Bhādrapada,* with pomp and devotion all over the country. Even Jains and Buddhists observe it in their own way. But for the majority of the Indians, it is an occasion of unprecedented jubilation. The celebrations continue for about nine days and on the last day the idols of Gaṇapati are taken in procession and submerged in the nearby tanks, rivers and sea. One unique feature of this festival is, the offering of twenty-one kinds of herbal leaves (एकविंशति पत्रपूजा) to the Lord. All those leaves and their flowers are of great medicinal value. In our childhood days, we were taken by our elders, to the outskirts of our village full of various flora, and were acquainted with their names, shapes and identity—like *Apāmārga, Bilva, Arka, Dhatūrā, Kapittha, Viṣṇukrāntā, Śamī* and so on. This practice creates in the younger ones, a curiosity and thirst for herbal and botanical knowledge, which will be an asset in later life. The moulding of Gaṇeśa idols in different colourful forms, develops among children, good taste, aesthetic sense and love for art.

Gaṇapati cult outside India—

In recent times scholars and indologists started believing that *Sanātana Dharma* had been a global phenomenon thousands of years ago, and the half-baked theories of the Western scholars were the results of ignorance, lack of proper comprehension of oriental scriptures, coupled with an air of authoritative complex of superiority. Now almost all their theories are set at rest. Names like Mexico (स्वर्णमाक्षिक), Guatemala (गौतमालय), California (कपिलार्णव), Brazil

(बृहज्जला) etc., are the corrupt forms of their *Saṁskṛta* origin, which find mention in *Mahābhārata, Skandapurāṇa* etc. California was the place of Kapila *Maharṣi*, who burnt the sons of Sagara to ashes, which fact stands proved by the neighbouring 'Ash Islands' even today! Unlike many other gods, the worship of Gaṇapati crossed the frontiers of India and has been still popular in the far-eastern countries of Japan, China, Indonesia, Combodia, Nepal, Tibet, even though its traces, alongwith those of other gods of Hindu culture stand erased today, in America, thanks to the inhuman, merciless and criminal massacres perpetrated on the innocent sons of the soil there, the Red Indians, by the hordes of Western settlers. In the far-east countries in Java, some of the Javanese, brought up in their traditional culture though they are considered Muslim's, still have great faith in this *Bhakti* cult. The Nepal Vināyaka possesses five elephant faces and lion mount. In Japan, there are icons depicting Gaṇeśa as a union of two elephants (one male and the other female) locked in an embrace. These are the idols of Gaṇeśānī, female aspect of Gaṇeśa also analogical to the *Saptamātṛkās—Īśānī, Roudrī,Vaiṣṇavī, Kaumārī* etc.

Thus we find that the *Gaṇapati cult,* has left its indelible marks, not only all over India, but even in many of the countries abroad. May the Lord Ekadanta shower His choicest blessings on the entire mankind.

वृक्षार्चने फलं किं वै यदि भूमिर्न चार्च्यते।
गते च कारणे कार्य्यं कुतः शस्यं कुतः फलम्॥
प्राणास्त्यक्ताः स्वेच्छया चेद्देहेन किं प्रयोजनम्॥

"What is the use of worshipping (watering) tree if the ground is not worshipped? If the cause itself is no more wherefrom will the effect come? If there is no ground the crops and the fruits can never be expected. If the *Prāṇas* (vital airs) are willfully given up what is the use of holding the body without life?"

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (VII. 37-38)

Hymn to Lord Gaṇeśa

—Dr. P. P. Sharma

You puzzle us O God
By your elephantine head
And your bulging belly
And, most, by your choice
Of your vehicle, the miniscule rat,
To carry you from place to place.

But vain it would be
To presume to scan
The ways of the gods
Who are so far above us,
Past our understanding.

You do well, O Vināyaka,
To first put obstacles
To make us see what we are,
Incapable to master them,
The smallest even.

Not until are we weighed down
With humility to propitiate you
Do you come scattering
Those mountains like
Feathers, O impediment-remover.

At the holy *Nilayam*
I've seen throngs upon throngs
Of pilgrims and devotees
Congregating from all the nooks and corners
Of our far-flung Bharata
And even from beyond
Putting their foreheads
First of all
Before your shrine,
Singing and chanting
Your paeon and glory.

In the sanctum sanctorum
When they assemble
Your's is the haloed name,
O Darling of Pārvatī.
Your face is
Auspiciousness incarnate.

Whom should they pray
Those planning
Grandiose designs
And fancy schemes,
Setting out on ardous journeys
Carving out a thing
Of surpassing beauty
But you, O four-armed one,
Lord of the hosts?

Who else can save us
Except you, O embodiment of wisdom,
When maddened with ego
We revel in acts of ignorance
Declaring them triumphs of intellect,

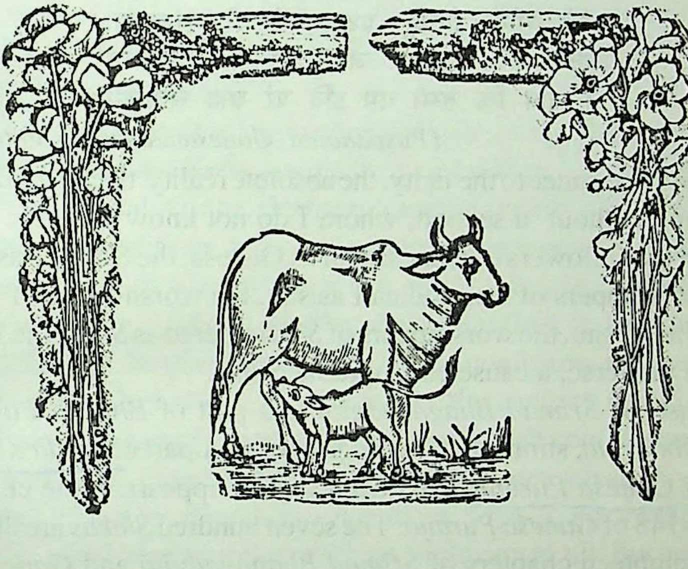
Feats of our ingenuity?
O bestower of intelligence
Teach us to distinguish
Between right and wrong.
Take away the pride
Which seeks to confound the two.

No one can claim you
As his own,
You are everybody's.
Being the son of Śiva
You are not hard to please.
You grant the trader prosperity
(For in one of your hands you carry a sweetmeat)
A poet the afflatus of the muses
(From another hand is suspended a manuscript)
But for you as a scribe
Would have borne no fruit
Vyāsa's great toil and labour.

No voice raised in prayer
Ever goes unheard.
No place, however difficult of access,
Remains unvisited by you
Who has for his transport
The insignificant rodent
(So mobile and manoeuvrable).

'Reverence to Gaṇeśa'
Was the first lesson I had learnt
When put to school
Before the mystery of the alphabet
Had unfolded before me.

That lesson one never outgrows
Howsoever far one may go
For a mind distraught
Peace will flow
Like a limpid stream,
From your lotus-feet
O Lord, Gaṇesa



Śrī Gaṇeśagītā and Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā– A Comparative Study

गणेशं गाणेशाः शिवमिति च शैवाश्च विबुधा
रविं सौरा विष्णुं प्रथमपुरुषं विष्णुभजकाः।
वदन्त्येकं शाक्ता जगदुदयमूलां परशिवां
न जाने किं तस्मै नम इति परं ब्रह्म सकलम्॥

(Puṣpadanta Gaṇeśamahimnaḥ Stotram 2)

"My obeisance to the deity, the absolute reality, the *Parabrahma,* the one without a second, whom I do not know what He is but whom the followers of Gaṇeśa call as Gaṇeśa, the Śaivites as Śiva, the worshippers of sun-god call as sun, the worshippers of Viṣṇu name as Viṣṇu, the worshippers of *Śakti* refer to as *Śakti*, the origin of the universe, a causeless supreme cause."

Just as *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* is a part of *Bhīṣma Parva* in *Mahābhārata,* similarly *Gaṇeśagītā* forms a part of *Krīḍā Khanḍa* of *Śrī Gaṇeśa Purāṇa.* This *Gaṇeśagītā* appears in the chapters 138—148 of *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa.* The seven hundred *Ślokas* are divided into eighteen chapters of *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* and *Gaṇeśagītā* contains 414 *Ślokas* in its eleven chapters. *Bhagavadgītā* was taught to Arjuna on the brink of the great *Mahābhārata* war when it was just to begin on the sacred soil of Kurukshetra. Similarly *Gaṇeśagītā* was taught to the king Varenya after the war was concluded at Rajur. The location of Rajur was some fourteen miles away from Jalna railway station. *Gaṇeśagītā* occupies a pride of place among the several *Gītās* composed on the pattern of *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā.* Among the so many *Gītās*, some important ones are *Bhagavadgītā, Rāmagītā*, *Haṁsagītā*, *Gurugītā*, *Avadhūtagītā* etc. These *Gītās* have dealt with the different subjects, but

Gaṇeśagītā and *Bhagavadgītā* discuss one and the same topic. The subjects like *Karmayoga* (selfless action), *Sāṅkhyayoga* (the path of knowledge) and *Bhaktiyoga* (the path of devotion) are dealt with in both the *Gītās* and their ideas are also similar. In *Gaṇeśagītā* certain points are emphasized more and while some other points have been discussed briefly. For example Yogic discipline, breath control *(Prāṇāyāma),* Tantric worship, mental worship and worship of the *Saguṇa Brahma* have been discussed in great details whereas subjects like *Vibhūtiyoga* and *Viśvarūpa Darśana* (having a vision of cosmic form of the Lord) have been simply touched and briefly discussed in *Gaṇeśagītā.* The words are different no doubt but the content is same.

Lord Gaṇeśa gave the knowledge of *Yoga* to king Vareṇya on the same pattern as Lord Kṛṣṇa taught the path of *Yoga* to His favourite disciple and friend Arjuna. But there is nothing noticeably different. Their mental conditions and physical circumstances were different. The first chapter of *Bhagavadgītā* is named as *Arjuna Viṣādayoga.* Arjuna was quite confused whether he should fight the war or not. His intellectual faculties gave way to the confusion and he was entirely unable to come to a decision. On the contrary *Gaṇeśagītā* started after the end of the war. There was no such confusion in the mind of Vareṇya. He was quite in a position to get salvation yet he had a problem of his own. It was not about what to do or what not to do. His mind was very clear with no confusion at all. But he was full of repentance that he could not recognise Lord Gaṇeśa even though He took birth in his own house. He could not tolerate the ugly shape of his son and abandoned Him on the bank of a lake. Fortunately the sage Parāśara found the boy and brought Him up. The same nine years old boy Gajānana killed Sindurāsura and removed the burden of the earth. Now the king decided to get refuge in the lotus-feet of the same Lord. The king prayed—

विघ्नेश्वर महाबाहो सर्वविद्याविशारद।
सर्वशास्त्रार्थतत्त्वज्ञ योगं मे वक्तुमर्हसि।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* I. 5)

"O Lord of obstacles, having large arms, You are the master of all the *Śāstras* and *Vidyās* (knowledge or learning). You know the real essence of whatever it is said in the *Śāstras.* You behove to teach me the knowledge." The Lord said in reply—

सम्यग्व्यवसिता राजन् मतिस्तेऽनुग्रहान्मम।
शृणु गीतां प्रवक्ष्यामि योगामृतमयीं नृप।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* I. 6)

"O king, by My grace your intellectual faculties are quite steady. Listen, I am going to tell you *Gītā* full of Yogic nectar." Then Lord Gaṇeśa showed to him the path of peace by teaching *Yoga.* The marks of 'स्थितप्रज्ञ' men tally with what is stated in *Bhagavadgītā* chapter second. Just like *Bhagavadgītā* the Lord Gaṇeśa said—"The features of real *Yogīs* are something different. They are free from covetousness, kind hearted, redeemers of the world; they always experience the all pervasive, absolute in every object they are always satisfied in themselves. In their eyes, gold, a clod of earth and stone—all are equal. We may compare—

ज्ञानविज्ञानतृप्तात्मा कूटस्थो विजितेन्द्रियः।
युक्त इत्युच्यते योगी समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः।।

(*Gītā* VI. 8)

We can compare the Vedic *Mantra* 'एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति' with *Gaṇeśagītā*—

शिवे विष्णौ च शक्तौ च सूर्ये मयि नराधिप।
याभेदबुद्धिर्योगः स सम्यग्योगो मतो मम।।

(I. 21)

"O king, having the intellect that can realise the oneness among Śiva, Viṣṇu, Śakti, Sūrya and Myself, is the real *Yoga* in My opinion." Like Lord Kṛṣṇa, Gaṇeśa also says—"I am everything and everything emanates from Me. I am the *Brahma,* the embodied existence, consciousness and bliss. About the imperishability of the soul both the *Gītās* use almost the same words—

अच्छेद्यं शस्त्रसंघातैरदाह्यमनलेन च।
अक्लेद्यं भूप भुवनैरशोष्यं मारुतेन च।।
अवध्यं वध्यमानेऽपि शरीरेऽस्मिन् नराधिप।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* I. 31-32

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः।।
अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च।
नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः।।

(*Gītā* II. 23-24)

"Weapons cannot cut it, nor can fire burn it; waters cannot drench it, nor can wind dry it and O king, even if this body is killed, the *Ātmā* cannot be killed."

Then again if we see—

यामिमां पुष्पितां वाचं प्रशंसन्ति श्रुतीरिताम्।
त्रयीवादरता मूढास्ततोऽन्यन्मन्यतेऽपि न।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* I. 33)

यामिमां पुष्पितां वाचं प्रवदन्त्यविपश्चितः।
वेदवादरताः पार्थ नान्यदस्तीति वादिनः।।

(*Gītā* II. 42)

Here one can notice the wordings of these two verses from the two different *Gītās*. Of course, the author of *Gaṇeśagītā* had his own way of explaining the version of *Bhagavadgītā* which decidedly differs from the other commentators, but the words are exactly the same. Lord Gaṇeśa further says—

यस्य यद्विहितं कर्म तत्कर्तव्यं मदर्पणम्।
ततोऽस्य कर्मबीजानामुच्छिन्ना स्युर्महाङ्कुराः।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* I. 36)

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत्।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम्।।

(*Gītā* IX. 27)

"One should offer the fruits of whatsoever prescribed action he does to Me. This way all the seedlings of his actions, virtuous or otherwise, will get destroyed before they reach the stage of fructification. We can also see the *Bhagavadgītā* (II. 42—46) while defining *Yoga* as renunciation of the actions, *Gaṇeśagītā says*—

धर्माधर्मौ जहातीह तयाऽत्यक्तउभावपि।
अतो योगाय युञ्जीत योगो वैधेषु कौशलम्।।

(I. 49)

After offering his actions and the fruits thereof to the Lord, one becomes quite unattached and untainted with the actions or their fruits. This way one should practise *Karmayoga* (actions without attachment to the fruits) and this is the real skill in the performance of any act. Such a *Yogī* is called 'स्थितप्रज्ञ' in *Bhagavadgītā*. The marks of such a 'स्थितप्रज्ञ' are described in the first chapter of the *Gaṇeśa Gītā* (53—64). In second chapter also the *Gītā* (56—71) discusses the same thing.

एवं ब्रह्मधियं भूप यो विजानाति दैवतः।
तुर्यामवस्थां प्राप्यापि जीवन्मुक्तिं प्रयास्यति।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* I. 69)

"O king, if by a stroke of luck even in old age one gets the knowledge of *Brahma,* he too becomes liberated while living in his body."

एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति।
स्थित्वास्यामन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति।।

(*Gītā* II. 72)

"One who has attained this Brahmic stage, can never get deluded and in the end while leaving the world gets salvation."

In the second chapter *Karmayoga* of *Gaṇeśagītā* the Lord has taught the real form of *Karmayoga* to Vareṇya. In the first chapter the path of knowledge which could illuminate the way of the *Sādhaka,* was thoroughly discussed. But it is not sufficient only to see the road. It is necessary to walk on that road. Here the belief and faith are also indispensable. In the first chapter of *Gaṇeśagītā* (34 and 38) there was something contradictory, so Vareṇya also enquired exactly like Arjuna—

ज्ञाननिष्ठा कर्मनिष्ठा द्वयं प्रोक्तं त्वया विभो।
अवधार्य वदैकं मे निःश्रेयसकरं नु किम्।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* II. 1)

"O Lord, You have described the two paths—the path of knowledge and the path of action. Now please tell me decisively only one of them that could be conducive of my ultimate good."

In the second verse of the third chapter in *Bhagavadgītā,*

Arjuna has asked exactly the same question—

व्यामिश्रेणेव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीव मे।
तदेकं वद निश्चित्य येन श्रेयोऽहमाप्नुयाम्।।

Now the Lord Gaṇeśa speaks—"The path of knowledge is meant for those whose intellect is steady while *Karmayoga* is for irresolute-minded persons. If somebody renounces prescribed actions due to the lethargy or mental dejection, he cannot achieve the state of inaction. As a matter of fact, nobody can remain physically inactive even for a moment as it is the nature of *Māyā* (obscuring potency) which through the three modes of *Prakṛti* causes a person to act always. Even if somebody has had full control over the organs of actions or even sense-organs and still he thinks of the sense-objects and the worldly pleasures, he is not a renouncer and deserves condemnation. Thus one who does everything in order to appease God, is the best among persons and real *Karmayogī.*"

Lord Gaṇeśa further says—

मदर्थे यानि कर्माणि तानि बध्नन्ति न क्वचित्।
सवासनमिदं कर्म बध्नाति देहिनं बलात्।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* II. 9)

"The actions which are done for Me, are not binding by nature. They do not shackle the doer. Only those actions which are done motivated by worldly desires, bind."

Regarding the creation work Lord Gaṇeśa says—"It is I who have created all these four *Varṇas* alongwith their natural duties together. Those duties are real sacrifices if performed unattachedly. It becomes a desire-bestowing tree *(Kalpavṛkṣa)* to the *Sādhaka*—

वर्णान्सृष्ट्वावदं चाहं सयज्ञांस्तान्पुरा प्रिय।
यज्ञेन ऋद्ध्यतामेष कामदः कल्पवृक्षवत्।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* II. 10)

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः।
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक्।।

(*Gītā* III. 10)

In both these verses the same idea is expressed. According to the *Gaṇeśagītā* quoted above, it is quite clear that the acts done

in accordance with the *Varṇa* and the *Āśrama* as prescribed in the scriptures without any mundane motive, are *Yajña*, sacrifices. When we offer and surrender every act in the feet of the Lord that also becomes *Yajña*. The description of such *Yajñas* that appeared in *Bhagavadgītā* is almost same in *Gaṇeśagītā* also—

शस्तोऽगुणो निजो धर्मः साङ्गादन्यस्य धर्मतः।
निजे तस्मिन्मृतिः श्रेयोऽपरत्रभयदः परः॥

(*Gaṇeśagītā* II. 35)

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात्।
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः॥

(*Gītā* III. 35)

Both the *Gītās* are of the opinion that the prescribed duties of a person in consonance with their *Varṇas* and *Āśramas,* even devoid of merit are preferable to the others' duties performed with perfect skill. It is better to die while performing one's own duties because this way the other-world becomes secure. Performing others' *Dharma* is always dangerous.

In the third chapter of *Gaṇeśagītā* which is captioned as *Vijñānayoga*, Śrī Gaṇeśa narrated the same things about His incarnation as Lord Kṛṣṇa expressed in *Bhagavadgītā* chapter four. *Gaṇeśagītā* deviates from *Bhagavadgītā* in its fourth chapter captioned as *Vaidha Saṁnyāsa Yoga* wherein it discusses the practice of *Haṭha Yoga* and *Prāṇāyāma* in greater details. They are as—

There are three types of *Prāṇāyāma*—

(1) *Laghu Prāṇāyāma* (2) *Madhyama Prāṇāyāma* (3) *Uttama Prāṇāyāma*.

(1) *Laghu Prāṇāyāma* which lasts upon a period of time taken in pronouncing twelve letters.

(2) *Madhyama Prāṇāyāma* that lasts till twenty-four letters are pronounced.

(3) *Uttama Prāṇāyāma* that takes time necessary for pronouncing thirty-six letters. By practising *Prāṇāyāma* one becomes capable of knowing all the three times—past, present and future—

अतीतानागतज्ञानी ततः स्याज्जगतीतले॥

(*Gaṇeśagītā* IV. 33)

The concentration of mind till a time required for twelve *Uttama Prāṇāyāmas*, is called *Dhāraṇā*. Two *Dhāraṇās* together are called *Yoga*. By practising this *Yoga* the *Sādhaka* acquires knowledge of the three times.

In the fifth chapter (*YogavṛttiPraśaṁsanaYoga*) of *Gaṇeśagītā* there is a detailed description of place, time and circumstances favourable or unfavourable and persons fit or unfit for practising *Yoga*.

तप्तः श्रान्तो व्याकुलो वा क्षुधितो व्यग्रचित्तकः।
कालेऽतिशीतेऽत्युष्णे वानिलाग्न्यम्बुसमाकुले।।
सध्वनावतिजीर्णे गोःस्थाने साग्नौ जलान्तिके।
कूपकूले श्मशाने च नद्यां भित्तौ च मर्मरे।।
चैत्ये सवल्मिके देशे पिशाचादिसमावृते।
नाभ्यसेद्योगविद्योगं योगध्यानपरायणः।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* V. 7—9)

One who is sorrowful, tired, perplexed, hungry, bewildered should not practise *Yoga*. The place which is too hot or cold, which is susceptible to fire and water, which is noisy, a dilapidated house, a cowpen with fire, near the water or well, cremation ground, river, on a wall, a place where there is murmuring sound, a heap of dry leaves, in Buddhist temple, where there is an ant-hill, a place haunted by ghosts, is unfit for Yogic practices. A *Yogī* should not practise *Yoga* at such places.

The circumstances, place and time mentioned above are said to be unfit and unfavourable for *Yoga*. There is always possibility of harm instead of benefit by practising *Yoga* in a manner not prescribed.

स्मृतिलोपश्च मूकत्वं बाधिर्यं मन्दता ज्वरः।
जडता जायते सद्यो दोषाज्ज्ञानाद्धि योगिनः।।
एते दोषाः परित्याज्या योगाभ्यसनशालिना।
अनादरे हि चैतेषां स्मृतिलोपादयो ध्रुवम्।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* V. 10-11)

If a *Sādhaka* has no knowledge of such faulty places and practises *Yoga*, he is very often apt to loose his memory, becomes dumb and deaf, lethargic, suffering from fever and inertia. A practiser of *Yoga* must avoid these faults. If he does not care for

this, he is sure to loose his memory.

A *Yogī* must be abstemious. King Vareṇya also, just like Arjuna, expressed his doubt and asked what result a person who has faltered from *Yoga*, meets. In reply, Lord Gaṇeśa assured him that such a *Yogī* as per his standard and ability goes to heaven; enjoys the divine pleasures and then takes birth in high families and starts his *Yoga* from where he left in his previous birth and ultimately attains Me.

न हि पुण्यकृतां कश्चिन्नरकं प्रतिपद्यते ॥

(*Gaṇeśagītā* V. 26)

"Nobody practising virtuousness, goes to hell." The same idea is expressed in *Bhagavadgītā* as—

न हि कल्याणकृत्कश्चिद्दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति ॥

(VI. 40)

In the sixth chapter (*Buddhiyoga*) of *Gaṇeśagītā* it is said—"A person due to his previous virtues desires to know Me. I fulfil the desire of My devotee. The person desirous of association with Me at the very end of his life, merges in Me. Those who know My reality, are well taken care of by Me."

In the seventh chapter (*Upāsanāyoga*) the path of devotion has been dealt with. Here devotion to the Lord with attributes, is called *Upāsanā*.

ध्यानाद्यैरुपचारैर्मां तथा पञ्चामृतादिभिः ।।
स्नानवस्त्राद्यलङ्कारसुगन्धधूपदीपकैः ।
नैवेद्यैः फलताम्बूलैर्दक्षिणाभिश्च योऽर्चयेत् ।।
भक्त्यैकचेतसा चैव तस्येष्टं पूरयाम्यहम् ।
एवं प्रतिदिनं भक्त्या मद्भक्तो मां समर्चयेत् ।।
अथवा मानसीं पूजां कुर्वीत स्थिरचेतसा ।
अथवा फलपत्राद्यैः पुष्पमूलजलादिभिः ।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* VII. 6—9)

"A person who worships Me with devoted heart and concentrated mind and offers to Me *Pañcāmṛta* (five ambrosial objects—milk, curd, ghee, sugar and honey) bathing, clothing, ornaments, fragrant objects, incense, lamp, *Naivedya*, fruits, betel leaves and *Dakṣiṇā*, I fulfil his desires. My devotee should worship Me this

way everyday with devotion. A mental worship with a concentrated mind may also be offered or fruit, flower, leaf or water whatever is available, should be offered to Me with devotion."

One should adopt either of the three methods—Tantric, mental or procedural through leaves, flowers etc., to worship Me, but selfless service is the best. Eventhough a person may have aversion for Me and worship some other deity, that worship also is bound to come to Me alone. This type of worship is against all the norms and standards. Such a perosn will come eventually on the right path but only after suffering a lot. In worship 'भूतशुद्धि' (purification of element planets or warding off evil spirits), *Prāṇāyāma, Nyāsa* (stationing letters of the *Mantra* or the deities in required limbs) repeating *Mantra* and reciting *Stotra* is necessary. Everybody is equally competent to worship Me. It is I who pervade all the worlds. One who knows these *Vibhūtis* (glories) of Mine and worships Me, does never perish.

Whatever the best, most effulgent or mightiest object one may find in the world, should be considered as My glory and a fragment of Mine.

यद्यच्छ्रेष्ठतमं लोके सा विभूतिर्निबोध मे॥

(*Gaṇeśagītā* VII. 25)

A similar expression from *Bhagavadgītā*—

यद्यद्विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा।
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोंऽशसंभवम्॥

(X. 41)

In the eighth chapter (*Viśvarūpa Darśana Yoga*) Śrī Gaṇeśa has also manifested His cosmic form. Just as emerging from the ocean all drops of water disappear mixing with the ocean, similarly innumerable universes were getting poured and being consequently disappeared in the cosmic body of Lord Gaṇeśa. Just like Arjuna, Vareṇya also overawed by seeing that horrible cosmic form, requests the Lord to adopt the same serene form as usual. Then Lord Gaṇeśa appeared in His *Saguṇa* form and told him that *Saguṇa* worship was dearer to Him.

यो मां मूर्तिधरं भक्त्या मद्भक्तः परिसेवते।
स मे मान्योऽनन्यभक्तिर्नियुज्य हृदयं मयि।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* IX. 3)

"O king, My devotee, who single-mindedly with love and devotion, worships Me in My embodied form, he deserves My love and respect."

In the ninth chapter *Kṣetrajñātṛjñānajñeyaviveka Yoga* Lord Gaṇeśa narrated to Vareṇya, the real knowledge of *Kṣetra* and *Kṣetrajña*, the three modes—*Satoguṇa*, *Rajoguṇa* and *Tamoguṇa* and their specific marks in brief.

येन येन हि रूपेण जनो मां पर्युपासते।
तथा तथा दर्शयामि तस्मै रूपं सुभक्तितः।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* IX. 40)

"In whatever form people worship Me, being pleased with their supreme devotion, I appear before them in the same form."

A similar expression in *Bhagavadgītā* runs as under—

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम्।।

(VII. 21)

In the tenth chapter (*Upadeśayoga*) Lord Gaṇeśa classified the human nature as divine, demoniacal and monstrous whereas in *Bhagavadgītā* there are only two divisions divine and demoniacal. The marks of divine nature are abstension from malicious gossip, absence of anger, fortitude, splendour, fearlessness, absence of pride etc., which give liberation. Extremist notions, prestige, pride, desire for enjoying pleasure etc., are marks of demoniacal nature which in the beginning appear as pleasurable and cause suffering in the end. Hard heartedness, blinding pride, infatuation, aversion, cruelty, incantation for burning or killing somebody, disbelief, impurity, cavillation, fear and untruth are the qualities of monstrous nature which cause the torture of hell. Because of their previous sins they return to this earth and become hunch-backed, blind, cripple and miserable by birth.

दैवान्निःसृत्य नरकाज्जायन्ते भुवि कुब्जकाः।।
जात्यन्धाः पङ्गवो दीना हीनजातिषु ते नृप।।

x x x

कामो लोभस्तथा क्रोधो दम्भश्चत्वार इत्यमी।।
महाद्वाराणि वीचीनां तस्मादेतांस्तु वर्जयेत्।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* X. 13. 23)

"O king, with a stroke of destiny if they come out of the hell and are reborn on the earth, they become blind and cripple by birth and miserable. They are born in the lowly castes. Lust, hunger, greed and snobbery—these four are the big gates for hell. Therefore they must be abandoned." Thus adopting divine nature the attainment of liberation should be attempted to.

In the last and eleventh chapter (*Trividhavastuviveka Nirūpaṇa Yoga*) the Lord deals with the three kinds of penance—bodily, verbal and mental. Straightforwardness, faith, purity, *Brahmacarya* and the worship of gods and brahmans are known to be the physical penance. Truthfulness with a sweet tongue, is the oral penance. Guilelessness or candour, concentration, peacefulness, mercifulness etc., are mental penances. Due to the association with the three *Guṇas* there can be another classification of penances—sacrifices, charity, knowledge, action, doer and pleasure etc., can also be divided into three categories. Among the three modes, *Satoguṇa* is the best and giver of liberation. The four gradations of the society are also based on these three modes and they all have their different duties.

स्वस्वकर्मरता एते मय्यर्प्याखिलकारिणः।
मत्प्रसादात्स्थिरं स्थानं यान्ति ते परमं नृप।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* XI. 34)

"O king, absorbed in their respective duties, the people of all the four grades if make complete surrender and offer all their actions to Me and go on acting, by My grace they attain to the supreme position." The similar ideas are expressed in *Bhagavadgītā* also—

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम्।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः।।

(XVIII. 46)

Just as *Bhagavadgītā* and *Gaṇeśagītā* were taught in different circumstances, in the same way the result of hearing these two *Gītās* was also different. Arjuna having his doubts removed, according to

his *Kṣatriya* duties got prepared for the battle but the king Vareṇya handed over the state administration to his son and at once went to the forest. There he practised *Yoga* and attained liberation.

त्यक्त्वा राज्यं कुटुम्बं च कान्तारं प्रययौ रथात्।
उपदिष्टं यथा योगमास्थाय मुक्तिमाप्तवान्।।

(*Gaṇeśagītā* XI. 38)

The description of his liberated stage is as under—

यथा जलं जले क्षिप्तं जलमेव हि जायते।
तथा तद्ध्यानतः सोऽपि तन्मयत्वमुपाययौ।।

"Just as water when merged in another water becomes water itself, similarly meditating on Gaṇeśa the *Parabrahma,* the king Vareṇya also merged in the ocean of *Brahma.* So far as popularity is concerned *Gaṇeśagītā* is little known. In comparison to it the propagation of *Bhagavadgītā* multiplied endlessly. The commentaries on *Gaṇeśagītā* are also very few whereas it is difficult to count correctly the commentaries on *Bhagavadgītā.* In spite of this fact the result of both the *Gītās*, is the same. A *Sādhaka* can choose either of the two and if he advances on the path taught by them, he will reach to the same position of the *Brahma* undoubtedly. This is because the subject matter and the style of exposition of both, is almost the same.

— *Kalyana*

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We both have had many births before in this world which I do remember and you do not. It is from Me that the Gods like Viṣṇu etc., emanated and when the time of final dissolution comes they dissolve and merge in Me. I am Brahmā. I am Mahārudra. I am the entire world mobile and immobile. I am birthless, imperishable, the *Ātmā* of all the creatures, beginningless and Lord supreme. With the help of My three-moded *Māyā* I appear in different forms.

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (III. 6—9)

Gaṇeśa Literature

Eventhough every Hindu worships Lord Gaṇeśa in the beginning of any undertaking for its successful completion, yet it is also a fact that most of them know little or a very little about Lord Gaṇeśa—His origin, the causes of His origin or incarnation, the philosophical aspect of Gaṇeśa-worship, the theological structure of Gaṇeśa-thinking and so on and so forth. It is a fact that the *Gāṇapatya* sect is geographically very limited yet the worship of Gaṇeśa as such is widely spread and very popular. A list of few books which can be useful to provide an exhaustive knowledge regarding Gaṇeśa cult, His individuality among the Hindu pantheon, the nature, emblems and their symbolic importance. These books will no doubt, provide a thorough understanding regarding Lord Gaṇeśa who is respected and worshipped by the common masses of India from the point of time beyond memory.

Saṁskṛta Language

(1) Gaṇeśa Purāṇa
(2) Mudgala Purāṇa
(3) Padma Purāṇa (Sṛṣṭi Khaṇḍa)
(4) Bhaviṣya Purāṇa
(5) Varāha Purāṇa (Ch. 23)
(6) Liṅga Purāṇa (Pūrva. Ch. 5)
(7) Śiva Purāṇa (Rudra Saṁhitā)
(8) Garuḍa Purāṇa (Sāroddhāra)
(9) Brahma Purāṇa (Ch. 39)
(10) Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa (Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa)
(11) Skanda Purāṇa

(12) Agni Purāṇa
(13) Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa
(14) Saura Purāṇa
(15) Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa
(16) Nārada Purāṇa
(17) Yājñavalkya Smṛti (Vināyaka Śānti)
(18) Gāṇapatya Upaniṣad
(19) Heramba Upaniṣad
(20) Gaṇeśapūrvatāpinyupaniṣad
(21) Gaṇeśottaratāpinyupaniṣad
(22) Brahmaṇaspati Sūktam
(23) Tantrasāra
(24) Gaṇeśa Gītā
(25) Gaṇeśagītā Śāstram
(26) Gaṇeśa Tattva Sudhā Laharī—Nīlakaṇṭha Śāstrī
(27) Mantramahārṇavaḥ
(28) Mantramahodadhiḥ
(29) Vināyaka Māhātmyam
(30) Śākta Pramodaḥ
(31) Gaṇeśa Stotrāṇi
(32) Gaṇeśāṣṭakam
(33) Gāṇapatyopayogī Pustakānām Saṅgrahaḥ
(34) Gaṇapati Tattva Ratnam
(35) Śrī Maṅgalamūrti Stotram
(36) Mahāgaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣa
(37) Mahāgaṇapati Saparyā Paddhati
(38) Śrī Śāradātilakatantram

Hindi Language

(1) Gaṇeśa—Dr. Śrī Sampūrṇānanda
(2) Śrī Gaṇeśamīmāṁsā—Śrī Kṛṣṇa
(3) Gaṇeśa Cālīsā, Gaṇeśāṣṭaka—Awadha Bihārī
(4) Gaṇapati Sambhavam—Pt. Prabhudatta Śāstrī
(5) Gaṇeśa Kathā— Bhagavānadāsa Awasthī

English Language

(1) Gaṇapati—Haridāsa Mitra
(2) Gaṇeśa—Alice Getty
(3) Śrī Gaṇeśa—Jean Herbert
(4) A Guide to Elephanta; Śāstrī
(5) Analysis of the Gaṇeśa Purāṇa; Stevenson
(6) AnOutline of the Religious Literature of India—Farquhar
(7) Brahmanical Gods in Burma—Ray, N. R.
(8) Brahmanism—Jacobi, H.
(9) Brahmanism and Hinduism; Monier-Williams
(10) Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology; Dowson, J.
(11) Dharani Cult; Waddel, W. A.
(12) Early Indian Iconography; Coomar Swamy, A . K.
(13) Elements of Hindu Iconography; Rao, T. A. G.
(14) Gaṇa Kārikā; Dalal, C. D.
(15) Gaṇapati; Mitra, H.
(16) Gāṇapatyas; Grierson, G. A.
(17) Gāndhāra Sculpture
(18) Gaṇeśa in Mahābhārata; Winternitz, M.
(19) Geneology of the South Indian Gods; Metzger
(20) Greatness of Gaṇapati, Sarasvatī
(21) Handbook of Hindu Mythology and Philosophy; Taylor
(22) Hindu Mythology; Wilkins, J. W.
(23) Indian Serpent Lore — Vogel, J. Ph.
(24) India the Empire of Svastika; Heras
(25) Medieval Temples of the Dekhan; Cousens, H.
(26) Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization;Zimmer
(27) Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India; Crooke,W.
(28) Religions of India— Hopkins
(29) Researches into the Nature and Affinity of Ancient and Hindu Mythology; Kennedy, Lieut. Col. K.
(30) Śakti and Śākta; Śākta Tantraśāstra; Woodroffe, Sir John,V.
(31) South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses; Śāstrī

(32) Temples and Legends of Maharashtra; Mate, M. S.
(33) Temples of Tamilnad; Das R. K.

The Lord Gaṇeśa who is a dwarf by size, pot bellied, having a bulky body, glowing with Brahmic effulgence, elephant-faced, shining like fire, one-tusked and endless, who is the ultimate preceptor of all the *Siddhas, Yogīs* and wise people; who is meditated upon by the Lordly gods like Brahmā, Śiva and Śeṣa etc., by the best sages, *Siddhas, Munis* and saintly people; who is majestic, eternal, the supreme reality, auspicious, the abode of all auspiciousness, remover of all obstacles, calm, bestower of all prosperity; for the men of action who is like a barge for crossing over the ocean of the world; who is always ready to defend and protect poor and miserable coming to his refuge; who is meditation incarnate, worth-achieving through spiritual disciplining, the lord of his devotees and who loves his devotees like his own children, should be meditated upon by all of us.

—*Brahavaivarta Purāṇa*

If you happened to see in dream a monk in ruddle garments with clean shaved head, you must be prepared to face a great calamity in the near future. If you see solar eclipse during night while dreaming, it is again extremely inauspicious. Seeing two rainbows is not good. If you see the sun coming to the west and felling the shining moon towards the earth, it is an indication that there may be fall of the kingdom. If two comets fighting with each other appear on the horizon, it is a sure indication that the administrative machinery will go to the ruins. If you see that your hairs and teeth have all of a sudden fallen and you are being dragged towards the southerly direction, it is a bad omen for your family. If you see a dream in the last hours of night in which the flag over the palace is broken, you must know for certain that there will be a fall of ruling dynasty.

— *Skanda Purāṇa, Kāśī Khaṇḍa* (56. 8—13)

The Mystique of Lord Gaṇeśa

—*N. S. Pandya*

अगजानन पद्मार्कं गजाननमहर्निशम्।
अनेकदं तं भक्तानां एकदन्तमुपास्महे।।

May we constantly meditate on Gaṇeśa, the God with the one-tusked elephant face, the sun that brightens the lotus face of His mother. He confers the knowledge of God and all prosperity on devotees.

* * * *

The fundamental truth inferred from the groundwork of observations in daily life, stated as a theoretical Maxim, governs the universe. Whatever is observed by us makes an impression on our mind. The interrelation of these impressions gives rise to a concept which when apprehended by our intellect, forms the basis of symbolical constructions. The coalescence of the generalised concepts enables us to understand the processes of nature which are in the form of a series of actions, events or a sequence of operations and changes culminating in a new state of existence. Conceived as a reflection of the distinctive nature of reality, the symbol the deity becomes ingrained in human consciousness.

The faculties of inference and imagination come into play to help the human mind which generally, is not capable of visualising the ultimate truth and reality of existence. A symbol—a reflection of the Supreme Reality can readily be grasped by human mind. It becomes a projection, on his mental screen, of an obscure entity in a form which, being perceived in a familiar form, is within his mental grasp.

Being easily cognisable, the impression created by the symbolic representation of the deity becomes an outlet for human

expressions—intellectual, inspirational and devotional. Following devoted meditation the symbol gathers strength, becoming real. Devotional supplications enable man to experience the Divine presence within himself leading to rapturous sublimation of existence.

* * * *

The human soul, enshrined in a material body, is a spark of the divine, an unit of the Supreme Universal soul. But, being generally incompetent to realise higher truths and conceive god as pure essence, man seeks aid from a benevolent deity. Realising this, the ancient masterminds created entities which are within the grasp of human intelligence. These personal gods, offering support and succour to the devotee, took anthropomorphic forms with characteristic individualities. Endowed with supernatural powers, they have their own will, reason and discrimination and are believed to be mysteriously capable of controlling all material and spiritual aspects of existence.

The devotee could establish intimate personal communion with his adored deity and implore him from the bottom of his heart. By his association with the deity the light from the higher spirit percolates down to him, through the lower, dense coverings. He no longer feels desolate and helpless, but has a protector and saviour, who can be approached with devotion and love, returning his love and devotion with divine grace. He, now, has someone whom his limited understanding can apprehend and who would come down to receive his supplications and worship. There is, now, someone to look up to with respect, veneration and confidence. The Divine Benevolence and unlimited grace of God inspire in him faith and hope for the achievement of his aim and fulfilment of his variegated dreams.

The prayers, to his all powerful personal deity, constituting a petition, a wish presented with unpretentious submission, makes him gain confidence to look forward to greater heights of exertion and achievements. Prayers, in the form of out-pourings of the

devotional sentiments of the human soul, express the love for his personal god, who becomes an object of profound devotion. The divine benevolence and wisdom of the deity alongwith his blessings, are solicited with deep, ardent devotion and supplication.

Prayers for blessings and assistance, supplications for inspirational grace and guidance arise from the deepest core of human soul. The very act of praying, not only becomes an act of earnest, solemn imploring of the deity, but raises the soul of the devotee to a very high level of spirituality, This is accomplished by indirect symbolic reference in the prayers which bring out the essence of the obscure elements associated with the deity in an understandable manner. As the implications of symbols become more intelligible, the devotee rises higher in the scales of spiritual experience.

* * * *

Symbols and mystical forms provide an easy approach to gods. The spiritual development of man is greatly helped by worship of symbols, rituals, ceremonies, images, sacred diagrams, divine patterns are all symbols to help man towards the contemplation of god.

The conception of a deity ensues from the intelligence of the human race. These concepts take the form of finite mental images representing supernatural beings who are believed to possess specialised abilities and are reflections of some aspect of true Reality—the immutable principle which is beyond the purview of human faculties.

The concepts of deities arose out of the uninhibited imaginings of man as he progressed in his intellectual persuits in keeping with the march of civilization. *Legenda* arouse giving full scope for flights of fancies, extolling the virtues, and powers of the deities. But behind all this, is the deep seated conviction in the existence of an impersonal prime cause—the rule of law which contains within itself the means of rectification of the aberrations from the appointed mode of action or thought.

The outward expressions of the powers of the deity take the form of laws of nature working for the benefit of the creation. Besides satisfying the need of man to have a guardian-angel, a patron god, who becomes a receptacle of his faith and devotion, helping him to face the hardships and afflictions of life, the personal god endows him with power to establish mastery over material forces by guiding him in his esoteric and intellectual endeavours. Man intuitively finds pleasure and fulfilment in communion with his personal god who is subconsciously seen as an aspect of the Supreme Benevolent element.

* * * *

Lord Gaṇeśa or Gaṇapati, the elephant-headed deity, the remover of obstacles, is the commandant of the *Gaṇas,* who are attendants of Lord Śiva. The *Gaṇas* are demigods or elementals who can be described as disembodied, incorporeal spirits most unlike human beings or other animals. The *Gaṇas* or elementals preside over aspects of nature as nature-spirits with specialised modes of consciousness and powers. The elementals can also be equated to the expression of subconscious mind of man. They represent the active power of nature, influencing the course of activities, operating from behind the illusion of *Māyā* (माया) and hence obscure to human intelligence. In accordance with the law of unity, in nature, the *Gaṇas* possess intelligence of an order superior to that in gross matter and depending upon their specialised functions exist as facets of human mind.

A thought in the human mind as it arises, blends with an elemental, becomes an entity and passes beyond his power. Thus the elemental has incorporated within itself the active elements of the power of human thought it is associated with, for the time being. Each human being has his own-elementals which represent his nature and inclinations and to which his thoughts become associated. The elementals can be assumed to exist at the etheric level which is a non-material, super-sensible and subtle medium, believed to pervade space (आकाश) and all bodies. The spiritual laws

and primary principles of life operate in this medium and form an agency facilitating intercommunication between man and his personal god.

* * * *

ॐ नि षु सीद गणपते गणेषु त्वाम् आहुर्विप्रतमं कवीनाम्।।
न ऋते त्वत् क्रियते किं चनारे महामर्कं मघवन्! चित्रमर्च।।

Aum, O Lord Gaṇapati, You are seated with full splendour amongst the *Gaṇas.* You are known as the most learned scholar amongst the wisest of scholars. Your presence is essential before undertaking any auspicious act. O Supreme God, O repository of splendrous faculties of omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience, bestow upon us the variegated, multifaceted knowledge of ultimate reality.

गजाननं भूतगणादिसेवितं कपित्थजम्बूफलचारुभक्षणम्।
उमासुतं शोकविनाशकारकं नमामि विघ्नेश्वरपादपङ्कजम्।।

"I bow down to the lotus-feet of 'विघ्नेश्वर', the ever victorious, attended upon by a multitude of spirits and demigods, feeding upon the elegant 'कपित्थ' (wood apple) and 'जम्बूफल' (rose-apple fruits),the son of 'उमा' destroyer of misfortune and grief".

विघ्नेश्वराय वरदाय सुरप्रियाय लम्बोदराय सकलाय जगद्धिताय।
नागाननाय सुरयज्ञविभूषिताय गौरीसुताय गणनाथ नमो नमस्ते।।

"O son of Gaurī, lord of *Gaṇas,* I bow down to Thee; You are the dispeller of obstacles, bestower of boons, beloved of the gods, pot-bellied, the integrated whole, benefactor of the world, having the face of an elephant and gracing the 'यज्ञ' of gods."

श्वेताङ्गं श्वेतवस्त्रं सितकुसुमगणैः पूजितं श्वेतगन्धैः
क्षीराब्धौ रत्नदीपैः सुरनरतिलकं रत्नसिंहासनस्थम्।
दोर्भिः पाशाङ्कुशाब्जाभयवरमनसं चन्द्रमौलिं त्रिनेत्रं
ध्यायेच्छान्त्यर्थमीशं गणपतिममलं श्रीसमेतं प्रसन्नम्।।

"Meditate upon, for peace profound, the Supreme Lord, 'गणपति', who is the essence of the purest spiritual purity, who is accompanied by the splendour of wealth, who is propitious, who is white bodied, who is adorned by white clothes, worshipped by gods and men with garlands of white flowers, white 'चंदन' and lamps of brilliant

jewels, seated on a throne of jewels in the midst of the ocean of milk, who is holding the noose and goad in one of His two hands and bears in the other two hands the 'मोदक' and displays 'अभयमुद्रा' and has the moon on His crest and has three eyes."

खर्वं स्थूलतनुं गजेन्द्रवदनं लम्बोदरं सुन्दरं
प्रस्यन्दन्मदगन्धलुब्धमधुपव्यालोलगण्डस्थलम्।
दन्ताघातविदारितारिरुधिरैः सिन्दूरशोभाकरं
वन्दे शैलसुतासुतं गणपतिं सिद्धिप्रदं कामदम्।।

"I bow down to the son of the daughter of the mighty mountain (पार्वती), who is having a rotund body, face of an elephant, pretty pendulous stomach, having temples which are surrounded by bees which are greedily enjoying the ichor exuding from them, who is resplendent with red colour of the blood of enemies torn asunder by the blows of His tusk and who is the bestower of 'सिद्धि' (accomplishments) and prosperity."

वक्रतुण्ड महाकाय सूर्यकोटिसमप्रभ।
निर्विघ्नं कुरु मे देव सर्वकार्येषु सर्वदा।।

"O Vakratuṇḍa (God having a crooked trunk), O Mahākāya (God having gigantic body) and having radiance like billions of suns, remove at all times all the obstacles in my path (of spiritual aspirations).

अभीप्सितार्थसिद्ध्यर्थं पूजितो यः सुरासुरैः।
सर्वविघ्नच्छिदे तस्मै गणाधिपतये नमः।।

"I bow down to the lord of *Gaṇas,* who is worshipped by gods and demons alike for the fulfilment of their desired object and who is queller of all obstacles."

यस्य स्मरणमात्रेण विघ्ना दूरं प्रयान्ति हि।
वन्देऽहं दन्तिवक्त्रं तं वाञ्छितार्थप्रदायकम्।।

"I bow down to the elephant-faced God, the bestower of desired objects and just by remembering whom all obstacles are dispelled."

ॐ एकदन्ताय विद्महे
वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि
तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात् ।।

Aum, we know the one-tusked God, we meditate upon the God having a crooked trunk, may that elephant-God inspire us.

Haridrā Gaṇeśa Kavaca

Haridrā Gaṇeśa Kavaca is a very powerful prayer. The Tantric scriptures are eloquent enough in praise of this *Kavaca*. By regularly reciting it eleven times a day (at least) one can get his object and motive materialised and achieved. A sickly person can improve his health and get rid of his physical ailments, a dull person can sharpen his intelligence to a considerable extent. A virgin can get a desired groom and unmarried man can get a wife. It is capable of providing victory over the enemies and what not.

The Lord spoke—

श्रृणु वक्ष्यामि कवचं सर्वसिद्धिकरं प्रिये।
पठित्वा पाठयित्वा च मुच्यते सर्वसंकटात्।।

"Listen darling, I am going to tell you the *Kavaca* which is capable of bestowing all accomplishments. By reciting or getting it recited, a person becomes crisis-proof."

अज्ञात्वा कवचं देवि गणेशस्य मनुं जपेत्।
सिद्धिर्न जायते तस्य कल्पकोटिशतैरपि।।

"If somebody repeats *Gaṇeśa Mantra* or *Stotra*, ignorant of this *Kavaca*, he can not achieve success even in crores of *Kalpas*."

ॐ आमोदश्च शिरः पातु प्रमोदश्च शिखोपरि।
संमोदो भ्रूयुगे पातु भ्रूमध्ये च गणाधिपः।।

"ॐ 'आमोद' may protect me on my head and 'प्रमोद' on my tuft, 'संमोद' may protect my two eyebrows and Gaṇādhipa the place between the two eyebrows."

गणक्रीडो नेत्रयुगं नासायां गणनायकः।
गणक्रीडान्वितः पातु वदने सर्वसिद्धये।।

"Gaṇakrīḍa may protect my two eyes and Gaṇanāyaka my nose. Gaṇakrīḍānvita may protect my mouth for all achievements."

जिह्वायां सुमुखः पातु ग्रीवायां दुर्मुखः सदा।
विघ्नेशो हृदये पातु विघ्ननाथश्च वक्षसि।।

"Sumukha may protect my tongue and Durmukha my neck. Vighneśa may protect my heart and Vighnanātha my chest."

गणानां नायकः पातु बाहुयुग्मं सदा मम।
विघ्नहर्ता च ह्युदरे विघ्नकर्ता च लिङ्गके।।

"The leader of the *Gaṇas* may always protect my two arms, Vighnahartā my stomach and Vighnakartā my phallus."

गजवक्त्रः कटीदेशे एकदन्तो नितम्बके।
लम्बोदरः सदा पातु गुह्यदेशे ममारुणः।।

"Gajavaktra may protect my waist and Ekadanta my hips. The red-bodied Lambodara may always protect my anus."

व्यालयज्ञोपवीती मां पातु पादयुगे सदा।
जापकः सर्वदा पातु जानुजङ्घे गणाधिपः।।

"One who wears the thread of serpent may always protect my two legs and Jāpaka may always protect my two knees and Gaṇādhipa my two shanks."

हरिद्रः सर्वदा पातु सर्वाङ्गे गणनायकः।
य इदं प्रपठेन्नित्यं गणेशस्य महेश्वरि।।

"Haridrā Gaṇanāyaka may always protect all my limbs. One who recites daily this *Gaṇeśa Kavaca*, O Pārvatī."

कवचं सर्वसिद्धाख्यं सर्वविघ्नविनाशनम्।
सर्वसिद्धिकरं साक्षात् सर्वपापविमोचनम्।।

"Which is known as bestower of all accomplishments and remover of all obstacles; giver of every success and redeemer of all sins."

सर्वसम्पत्प्रदं साक्षात् सर्वपापविमोक्षणम्।
सर्वसंपत्प्रदं साक्षात् सर्वशत्रुक्षयंकरम्।।

"Giver of all prosperity and remover of all sins. Giver of wealth and annihilator of all enemies."

ग्रहपीडा ज्वरारोगा ये चान्ये गुह्यकादयः।
पठनाद्धारणादेव नाशमायान्ति तत्क्षणात्।।

"All planetary troubles, fever and other diseases caused by *Guhyakas* (Yakṣas) get, immediately destroyed by reciting this *Kavaca* or having it on person as a *Yantra*."

धनधान्यकरं देवि कवचं सुरपूजितम्।
समं नास्ति महेशानि त्रैलोक्ये कवचस्य च।।

"This *Kavaca* is adored by even gods and is capable of providing all sorts of wealth. There is nothing equal to it in all the three worlds, O Maheśānī."

हारिद्रस्य महेशानि कवचस्य च भूतले।
किमन्यैरसदालापैः यत्रायुर्व्ययतामियात्।।

"O Maheśānī, since the life on this earth is very unstable and exhausts very soon, so it is not at all advisable to indulge oneself in malicious gossips. Only *Haridrā Gaṇeśa Kavaca* should be recited and adored."

(1—14)

This alone is sufficient to remove all crises and provide every comfort and assure final deliverance.

A king should get up early in the morning much before the dawn and should remember the earth, preceptor, his personal deity and family deity. Then finishing his daily routines, should do *Sandhyopāsana*, the worship of God and study of scriptures. A king should not take food unless he has performed *Balivaiśvadeva*. He should respect scholars and sages and guests. He should be benefactor to all his subjects. His conduct should be guided by the religious scriptures and ethics. His administration should be just and moral. He should keep the royal secrets strictly guarded. Keeping the subjects happy, is the only and the best *Dharma* for a king.

—*Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* (3)

No person can ever remain actionless even for a moment. He is bound by the modes of nature to do this or that. One who starts actions stubbornly by keeping away his senses from their specific objects and still mentally thinking of them, is a hypocrite and must be condemned. One who, in the beginning, controls his senses by his tranquil mind in the real sense, and then does actions, he is really the dispassionate one.

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (II. 4—6)

Gaṇeśa: The Overlord of Universe

—Sri Swami Brahmananda

ॐ ॐ ॐकाररूपं त्र्यहमिति च परं यत्स्वरूपं तुरीयम्।
त्रैगुण्यातीतनीलं कलयति मनसस्तेजसिन्दूरमूर्तिम्।।
योगीन्द्रा ब्रह्मरन्ध्रे सकलगुणमयं श्रीहरेन्द्रेणसंगम्।
गं गं गं गं गणेशं गजमुखमभितो व्यापकं चिन्तयन्ति।।

For communion with the universal and Eternal One—the mystic Gaṇeśa, the *Yogīs* contemplate and concentrate upon the Supreme thousand-petalled conscious centre and meditate on the elephant-headed Gaṇeśa, who is the personification of *Praṇava* the divine word *Oṁ*, who is beyond the three modes of mother nature, *Prakṛti*, who is the great,beyond, who enlightens the mind, who is divine effulgence itself, who is of bright red hue, who is endowed with all the auspicious divine qualities and who is omnipresent.

Gaṁ (गं) is the *Bīja Akṣara* or seed letter of Gaṇeśa. Lord Gaṇeśa is revered and venerated by all, all over the created world and at all times. Gaṇeśa, as the overlord, gets the first worship in all ceremonial functions and religious observances and activities.

He is privileged to get the first worship and offerings. Lord Gaṇeśa is worshipped to get the obstacles removed that hinder our path of life. He destroys all the impediments that obstruct us in carrying out our dutiful jobs, however hard they might be. Gaṇeśa is prayed for wisdom of soul and knowledge of the world.

The boy Gaṇeśa is a favourite child of the primeval parents Śiva and His Śakti (Pārvatī).

As the symbolical frame of His form is peculiar, His emergence into this wide world is also an awesome lore. The Mother of creation gave Him form and name. None other than her knows it. Life was

injected into Him. His mother Pārvatī kept Him to guard the home while entering into her bath-room. Lord Śiva, while returning home, was just about to enter the doorway. He never knew this new door-keeper, before. The boy, too, did not know who the newcomer was. Since the boy objected His entrance, Śiva cut off His head from the body. Sensing the sounds, Pārvatī came out. A great mess of things happened. The living boy now is in the shape of a bundle of flesh and blood. She wailed over the incident. She requested Śiva to bring Him back to life. Śiva wanted to stitch another head to the trunk. But, He could not secure a human head immediately, in the vicinity. So, He brought the head of an elephant and attached to the fallen trunk of the little child Gaṇeśa. Then and there, He became alive. From that moment, He has become a favourite to both. Blessed boy Gaṇeśa, talented as He is, endeared Himself to the parents.

As His emanation into this world is very curious and abnormal, so also His form, name, the whole play of His life is symbolical and allegorical. Everything that connects His life, is simply exhilarating and thought-provoking. In mythology, His portion is always educative and instructive.

One could get any amount of amusement as well as self-knowledge by the mere external study of His physical life. One cannot record the inner direct experiences that the spiritual *Sādhaka* attains to, on meditating on the spiritual truth that He represents.

All the mythological gods of the *Sanātana Dharma* are various personifications of the principles and powers that are deified through which the omnipotent *Brahma* makes the created world roll on the most sportive designs and devices. Through these deified authorities, He carries the rule of the created world. Here lies the potency of the *Sanātana Dharma* in making the souls understand and experience the inner truth which has no physical form to be conceived by the myth-mind or the limited intellect.

Those who are not conversant and unacquainted with the subtle spirit of the teachings of *Sanātana Dharma*, cannot even conceive

the implied understandings of the creator, created and the creation. Those who can get at the spirit of the message of *Sanātana Dharma*, can easily reach to the subtle source of that All-Blissful one who planned and schemed the mechanism and technique behind the government of the nature in a very disciplined and orderly way, which never fails.

The immortal Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, who spread his inner divine vision all over the universe, saw many irreligious and unreligious thoughts that are hovering over the minds of human beings and completely polluted the belief of man. He concluded that only a total reformation and a whirlwind revolution is needed to make the dawn of wisdom clear and bright. He condemned outright all the semi-demi-god religions as they blurred the human right understanding of the one Universal Truth. After the swooping work, he recognized and authorised six thought-currents as logical and rational and which can guide and lead the truth-seeker to the ultimate. Out of those six scientific spiritual *Sādhanās*, *Gāṇapatya*, the worship of Gaṇeśa as one that can relieve the human soul from its mundane bondages that Śaṅkara accepted and passed for genuine and true methods of understanding and realising the lone sole truth of the divinity.

So Gaṇeśa is great. Gaṇeśa is Supreme. Gaṇeśa is to be venerated for all times.

Gaṇeśa is to be worshipped at first. Nothing can be performed without propitiating the propitious deity, Lord Gaṇeśa. Of course, one may say that there is that Viṣvaksena worship which *Vaiṣṇavas* do in the beginning. In the Absolute Truth, Gaṇeśa and Viṣvaksena are two forms of one principle. So, there is no need for allowing us to be confused. We can rest at peace in such matters. Each one is free to follow his own traditions, beliefs and order of life. The one God will bless both equally with full compassion and benevolence.

There is a mythological story to narrate why Lord Gaṇeśa is endowed with that rare privilege of being worshipped first before proceeding to perform any other religious ceremony.

Once, there was a controversy between the two brothers, Gaṇeśa and Subrahmaṇya regarding the place of supremacy. They both prayed to their parents to mediate. They said that who goes round the globe thrice in advance, will be decided as the Supreme. As you all know well, it was impossible for Gaṇeśa with His big belly, shortlegs and with a rat as conveyance. But, He won the race. That too, with right means, but, never with foul means. It is His greatness. With that greatness, He is considered 'great'. Since, He won the race, He got the right of being worshipped prior to anything by observing and executing the duty allotted to Him only by adopting the fair means.

Saint Tulasīdāsa ascribed the reason for Gaṇeśa's privilege and worthiness for the right of getting the worship first to his unending remembrance of *Rāma-Nāma*.

There may be many reasons too, for the priority of His being declared as the one to be worshipped in the first place itself.

He earned this rare right by winning over the race between Himself and His brother by using His god-given intelligence more shrewdly and keenly in using the right means than His brother. Physical power and prowess is less than the crystal-pure intellectual *Sāttvika* power which is more near and lies more in proximity with the divine power.

It is expected in the order of on-going world process, that only right means should be applied to achieve anything either of this world or of the other world. Right means mean godly while wrong means are devilish. Right means have the right to get blessings of the All-benevolent while the wrong means get curses from the creator.

Gaṇeśa is right means. Right means will always win. The right means can always hurdle over any sort of obstacles that stand in its way. That is why Gaṇeśa has got another name, Vighnahara the destroyer of obstacles.

Right means—path of righteousness (धर्ममार्ग). We have seen this till now from a mythological understanding. Now, let us see the

philosophical understanding also.

Puruṣārthas (पुरुषार्थाः) are the achievements which every aspiring soul should try to attain as a 'must' before he exits from this earthly plane of his existence.

Dharma, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa* are the four principal objects which a human soul is to aim at. The whole creation is so planned that each and every individual soul should pass through the orbit of these four objects only and end his mundane life with liberation.

The first one can never be neglected under any circumstances to possess *Artha* and enjoy *Kāma*. One cannot leave *Artha* and *Kāma* for they are essential for leading a physical life. *Artha* and *Kāma* should be earned and enjoyed as per the injunctions of the Dharmic code a modified manifesting of God. Right means (धर्ममार्ग) is to be given priority while we start to do any of our spiritually obliging activities. First priority in observig *Dharma* for *Artha* and *Kāmia* is nothing else than offering worship to Gaṇeśa—the *Dharma Mārga* in the very beginning before any other observance.

While working for *Artha* and *Kāma*, if *Dharma* is neglected by anyone, he is sure to create for himself obstacles and hurdles endlessly also making his *Mokṣa* (liberating himself) a will-o'-the-wisp. Doing everything with right means, means crossing all the tests and trials as crossing a foot-print of cow, i.e., Gaṇeśa transforming our stumbling blocks into stepping stones.

They say Rāmacandra is an embodiment of *Dharma*. *Dharma* is nothing but right means. Rāma never stooped to foul means under any circumstances. His thought, word and deed are always based on right means. His whole life is pregnant with right means.

Rāma never tasted a defeat; never been confronted with any sort of failure in His endeavours. Why? Because, He never used His faculties in a foul way. There can be no defeat through right means. There can be no success by foul means.

In support of this fact, *Gītā* as a categorical imperative, declares that that happiness which is like gall at first, ambrosial at the end, born of lucid self-understanding is called pure *Sāttvika*. And, that

happiness arising out of contact of senses with objects at first like ambrosia, at the end like gall is called affective passionate (*Rājasika*).

Since Gaṇeśa Himself is personification of right means, as Rāma for *Dharma*, there cannot be any obstacles in the divine principle, *Tattva* of Gaṇeśa. If any obstacle tries to raise its ugly head in 'right means' it is sure to be destroyed. That is why Gaṇeśa is Vighnahara. For this every sane one worships Gaṇeśa in the beginning of his starting any effort, so that there should be no defeat of any sort.

Gaṇeśa's eyes are small and steady and concentrated. He possesses the capacity of understanding anything in its right perspective, however much it may be puzzling. They say that elephants are very shrewd and intelligent in understanding things quickly. Geṇeśa is worshipped by all to be blessed with the faculty of wisdom. Every student starts his studies after praying to Gaṇeśa alone. Gaṇeśa is god of education.

There is an episode in *Mahābhārata*. Sage Vyāsa who is considered to be Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself, wanted a scribe to write down the epic as he goes on dictating non-stoppingly. None came forward to take up the job. Gaṇeśa expressed His readiness to do the job without the least hesitation. Vyāsa said that He should not ask time and again to repeat what he dictated. To that, Gaṇeśa retorted abruptly that he should not tell anything without knowing all the implication that will be in his own dictations.

Why Gaṇeśa has been deemed as the rightful scribe is due to the fact that He knows everything or rather He is the All-knower being nay, as the very source of knowledge.

Rightful means is Gaṇeśa. Gaṇeśa is *Parabrahma*. So *Parabrahma* and right means are identical. By worshipping Gaṇeśa firstly means applying right means at the beginning of anything. Then, there cannot be any failures. So the *Dharma* demands us to achieve everything through right means alone. The same verdict in another form of stipulation is, 'offer your worship to Gaṇeśa first and then proceed.'

According to *Gāṇapatya*-process of realizing the reality, the sole goal of all human beings, the worship of Gaṇeśa or spiritually understanding the principle of Gaṇeśa will lead one to the source.

As per Yogic terminology, plexus *Mūlādhāra* pertains to earth principle. Earth is considered to be Mother. Within its womb, *Kuṇḍalinī* serpent power is lying dormant. So Gaṇapati is to be worshipped there. 'त्वं मूलाधारे स्थितोसि नित्यं'. For Gaṇeśa is residing in the source *Mūlādhāra*.

From that starting point, the seventy-two thousand nerves *Nāḍīs* of the nervous system in the body spread towards every nook and corner of the body to invest its force in all the millions of atoms that are in all the created beings.

The creative, preservative and the dissolutive principles of which Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra are the personifications, all are subordinative to the source-force at the *Mūlādhāra*. The same source-force is attributed to the form-name, Gaṇeśa the *Parabrahma*.

So 'आदौ पूज्यो गणाधिप:' Gaṇeśa or Gaṇādhipa is to be worshipped in the first itself before we start worshipping any other deity.

Everything is to be adopted and acted according to the passing of time and context of the place in space. 'कलौ चण्डीविनायकौ' in the present aeon, *Kali*, the worships of Gaṇeśa and Caṇḍī are most beneficial. *Kali* means sin. The symbolic elephant force has immence capacity in eradicating the sinning tendencies,that goad the *Jīvas* (souls). The wise say that when that *Upāsanā*—worship of that symbolic Gaṇeśa is missing, even the most righteous also will be heckled.

In *Saṁskṛta*, elephant means 'हस्ती', 'हस्त' is trunk. That which possesses a trunk is *Hastī*. Scripture declares—in the galaxy of stars, those that are in the form of 'हस्त' trunk is 'भगो देवता' God *Bhaga*. *Bhaga* is the possessor of *Ṣaḍguṇas*—'ऐश्वर्यम्, वीर्यम्,यश:, कीर्ति:, विवेक: and वैराग्यम्'. All these epithets are due only to the *Parabrahma* only.

Bhaga is that out of which everything that is visible and invisible, emanates. All this manifested is an expression of that unmanifested—*Bhaga*. The *Brahma* Gaṇeśa is understood in that

way. So, *Gāṇapatya* has been recognised as one of six ways of God-realization—the only final destination of each and every being.

The word '*Bhaga*' has been extracted in this way. In *Saṁskṛta*, there is the word 'अहोरात्र'. When you drop out the first and the last syllables from *Ahorātra, Horā* remains. So, also, there is the word *Vallabhagaṇapati*. When you leave out the first and the last few syllables—there remains *Bhaga*. *Bhaga* possesses the six super-human or unadulterated divine powers—faculties. In *Parabrahma* alone, they, the above six affluencies can be expected. Since *Bhaga*—Vallabha Gaṇeśa is having all the above qualifications, He is accounted as *Parabrahma*. This is all possible only when Gaṇeśa is *Brahma*.

For the followers of *Gāṇapatya*, *Vallabheśopaniṣad* is one of the prime important text-books. Vallabha is the daughter of Marīci a *Svayambhū* or self-existent being. She is the sister of Kaśyapa. In the emanation of the manifested out of the unmanifested, certain powers are there to work out the God-ordained process. The three—Marīci, Kaśyapa and Vallabha are such.

By the authority of *Veda*—"मरीचयः स्वायंभुवाः । ये शरीराण्यकल्पयन् । ते ते देहे कल्पयन्तु." Marīci is self-existent. The sun in summer through his rays attracts the vigour that is pervading between the sun and the earth. Alongwith these, Marīci, the sap of the nature—also attracts the *Jīvas* (souls) and creates them by giving life and bodies to them via rain and herbage.

The *Marīci* is 'रस' the essential godly spirit that gives sustentation to all this nature—which is seen and felt. The principle '*Tattva*' *Marīci* created mainly *Kaśyapa*. Out of the eight bright rays of the sun, the ray *Kaśyapa* is the most important. 'कश्यपः पश्यको भवति'. By changing the place of the syllables, *Kaśyapa* becomes *Paśyaka*. *Paśyaka* means seer. He is the realizer of the numerical seven. The crest jewel of the human body, is the head. In it, there are seven-fold *Prāṇas*. *Kaśyapa* is the seer of those. He is the *Jīva*—soul. He is the witness. His better half is *Aditi*. *Mahāmeru* is the centre of gravity for the created world. All these sentient beings are being generated

by the communion of *Aditi* and *Kaśyapa*. This communion and generation of beings is not limited to souls and the sun. It is the cause for all the atoms of the five elements. These atoms such as electrons, protons and newtrons, etc., are million-billion trilions.

Such *Kaśyapa* is the brother of *Vallabha*—the primeval power *Śakti*. Vallabheśa i.e., Gaṇeśa is the husband of that *Śakti*, Vallabha. So He is Vallabheśvara. This means Gaṇeśa is the supreme sovereign entity who creates, preserves and dissolves everything into its original state.

The seed word for *Gaṇeśa Mantra* is 'गं'. The seed word *Gaṁ* is the symbolic sound form of the *Brahma*—Gaṇeśa.

गणको ऋषिरस्यास्तु देवता वल्लभेश्वरः।
निचृद्गायत्री छन्दोऽस्य गं बीजं सर्वकारणम्।।

Gaṁ the seed word is the cause of all causes. There are so many hymns (*Mantras*) to achieve various benefits. One of them is *Gāyatrī Gaṇapati.* The same thing is called *Bharga Vidyā.* It blesses the one who practises the *Gāyatrī Gaṇapati* or *Gaṇeśa Gāyatrī* regularly, with the final beatitude. It brings lustre to the personality. One gets inexplicable divine happiness along with the happiness of the world. 'ब्रह्माभेदैक्याकृति धरो वल्लभेशः'—Vallabheśa the Gaṇeśa is the one who possesses an identical form and indivisible with *Brahma*.

Gaṇeśa has been blessed and assigned the post of commander over all the *Pramathas*—attendants of God Śiva. So, Gaṇeśa 'प्रथमो प्रमथेश्वरः' the pioneer of all *Pramathas, Gaṇas,* troops of demigods or deities of lower cadre who are the attendants of Lord Śiva. Hence, He is called Gaṇeśa, Gaṇapati or Gaṇanāyaka etc., He has attained to this key-post simply by being completely and faithfully devoted to the parents the universal father, Lord Śiva and the universal Mother Pārvatī— 'द्यौः पिता पृथिवी माता' *(Veda)*.

When the individualized soul cuts asunder the knots at the various lower plexus of consciousness and goes up and joins with the Supreme at the thousand-petalled *Sahasrāra,* he becomes the *Brahma.* Until then, he retains his Jīvahood alone. To show this,

they say that upto *Viśuddha Cakra* (plexus) and below that portion all is nature i.e., limited consciousness and consciousness adulterated with those ignorant thoughts and ideas of 'I' and 'mine'. Above that, is unlimited consciousness or God-consciousness or the state of *Brahma.* The lower human form in Gaṇeśa is nature and the above elephant face is *Puruṣa*—the *Parabrahma.*

He has big ears. It denotes that Gaṇeśa—*Paramātmā* hears to the praises of the devotees with His wide ears well. For this, He is called as 'उपमश्रवस्तमम्' by the *Vedas.*

The one who can grasp the oneness among all beings and also who sees the same oneness among the nations with one-pointed vision is considered to be the supreme or super human. It is an extraordinary or divine capacity. That capacity has its seat in the eleventh hand i.e., the trunk of Gaṇeśa. In Vedantic terminology, it is nothing but the mind. Mind is a projection of self consciousness. Trunk is likewise a projection of the body. They, the realized say that the twists in the trunk is '*Oṁkāra.*' The trunk of Gaṇeśa is described as 'रत्नखचित हेमघट:'. With that trunk, He sucks the gem-like devotees into Him as it sucks water into it. The curved trunk is ideation for the power of discrimination. The *Abhayamudrā* of Śrī Gaṇeśajī is a sign that He will protect us all always.

गजाकारः तुरीयो मूर्धा तस्त्रहं शुंडा नानाविधरत्नपूरितघटा तदायुधम्। एकादशायुधराजितैकादशकरः वल्लभेशः।

'आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात्'. That splendour of millions of suns beyond the pitch darkness is *Puruṣa.* He is Gajānana—the elephant-headed one, the Supreme.

The three—wakeful, dreaming and deep-sleep state are human nature. That is why Gaṇeśa is represented below as human form.

The fourth state of consciousness i. e., *Turīya* is symbolic of the above portion—the trunk in the head of elephant. Its weapon is the pot which is studded with all the precious stones.

On *Vināyaka Caturthī,* we all worship Lord Śrī Gaṇeśa with a great eclat with so many varieties of fruits, flowers, herbs and so on. Each and everything of them serves humanity in one way or

the other. Let us see.

Generally, we offer Gaṇeśa baked rice balls to which pulses also are added. These rice balls are strength giving thus says—*Āhāraguṇamañjarī*. They are eaten along with joggery. Joggery enhances the digestive power. Also it removes diseases caused by gout and bile. *Suśruta* is the authority for this. On the great festive day, we all consume pounded gingily with joggery. It is good for diseases of the lungs and eyes. So speaks *Āyurveda*.

We worship Vināyaka with *Bilva* leaves. The extraction of its leaves works on skin diseases. The 'उत्तरेणि' Archyranthes Aspera which we use in the worship, helps in the longevity of the teeth. The 'बदरी' (Jujube leaf zizyphus jujuba) cleanses the tone. Holy Basil (ocimum sanctum) cures aphtha. The sweet scented oleander (nerium adorum) is capable of eradicating dandruff. *Devadāru* pine (pinus longifolia) is an insecticide. *Jāti* (जाति) drives away indigestion. As per *Āyurveda, Suddhipatra* is used in manufacturing *Arjunāriṣṭa*—a tonic.

An elephant is a symbol for strength and intelligence. The elephant's head denotes intellectual faculty. A rat is a minute creature whereas an elephant is a huge one. The face of an elephant endowed with complete and universal gifts alongwith the conveyance rat is worthy of praise by sages.

The serpentine sacred thread on His body is a symbol for His celibacy. One who possesses unruffled mind, will have enlightened intelligence (बुद्धि). With that, He will be blessed with *Siddhi*—accomplishment. *Buddhi* and *Siddhi* are Gaṇeśa's better halves and His two sons are Kṣema and Lābha—welfare and profiteerer.

We easily notice how in *Sanātana Dharma,* external worldly life and internal spiritual life are blended as one which look like inseparable in our day-to-day life.

From all this, we come to know how mystically the mysticism about Gaṇeśa is explained in scriptures to help us reach the Supreme State directly.

The form and name of Gaṇeśa, the history of Gaṇeśa, His

symbolism, His philosophy, our worship towards Him, is all mystical. Whoever worships Him mystically, will be blessed with whatever he pines for.

May the Lord Gaṇeśa bless all. May He make the dawn of peace expedited for all the sentient and insentient beings everywhere universally. For the devilish forces are running rampant creating chaos and unrest all over the universe as if there is none to check them.

May peace be unto all.

Oṁ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ.

The images of the Lord Gaṇeśa are found in temples in different shape and size, small and big and gigantic but *Matsya Purāṇa* prescribes the Gaṇeśa idols of a certain size to be installed in the houses for domestic worship. It may be of the size of the first part of the thumb and should not be bigger than twelve fingers (nine inches approximately). It says—

अङ्गुष्ठपर्वादारभ्य वितस्तिं यावदेव तु।
गृहेषु प्रतिमा कार्या नाधिका शस्यते बुधैः॥

"From the first part of the thumb upto the nine inches in length is the limit of a Gaṇeśa idol to be installed in the houses and not more than that in any case."

If a personal temple of Gaṇeśa is to be built, it must be in the north-east corner from the house (ऐशान्यां देवमन्दिरम्) and the image must be facing west ward (देवानां हि मुखं कार्यं पश्चिमायां सदा बुधैः).

—*Compiled*

सर्वं जगदिदं त्वत्तो जायते। सर्वं जगदिदं त्वत्तस्तिष्ठति। सर्वं जगदिदं त्वयि लयमेष्यति। सर्वं जगदिदं त्वयि प्रत्येति। त्वं भूमिरापोऽनलोऽनिलो नभः। त्वं चत्वारि वाक्पदानि।

"The entire world emanates from You. The world is sustained by You and eventually it merges in You. The entire cosmic creation simply appears in You. It is You who are earth, water, fire, air and ether. You Yourself are fourfold speech—*Parā, Paśyantī, Madhyamā* and *Vaikharī.*"

—*Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣopaniṣad*

Lord Gaṇeśa: The First Worshipped God

—S. K. Trivedi

Lord Gaṇeśa has been worshipped before any other God ever since he won the coveted honour vis-a-vis the better equipped and mightier competitors by his sheer wit, intellect and presence of mind. He did not rush like all others to circumambulate the universe (Had he done so, naturally on his slowest moving carrier, he would have stood no chance whatever and must have finished the last in the race). No one took him seriously (they must have ridiculed him); consequently it was but natural for them to be surprised on seeing this dark horse already wearing the laurels of glorious victory. The name of the Lord of the universe, Rāma, came to his rescue according to one version, and his parents, according to another. It was the victory of wit over speed, intellect over prowess, and presence of mind over resources. This unimaginable feat of the Lord gives heart to them also, who bitten by the bug of inferiority complex, feel incapable of doing anything remarkable.

He gets priority in every walk of Indian life. Be it a ceremony, a religious, social or community gathering, a festival, an inauguration, a journey, laying of a foundation.....Even a war, the *Laḍḍūs* are served to Him first. In fact, Śrī Gaṇeśa is synonym of a beginning, and most interestingly, the elephant has become a symbol of the Lord (perhaps no other animal enjoys this status): An elegantly decorated elephant is a must (of course, for those who can afford) on such pious occasions like marriage.

Lord Gaṇeśa heads the noisy and boisterous *Gaṇas* of Lord Śiva, the easiest to please (Āśutoṣa). They dwell in such horrible places that one shudders to think of, eat and drink anything and

everything (including blood and corpses), live in anyway they like (even naked, filthy, abominably and horribly). This itself implies abnormality of every kind in them, often referred to as *Bhūtas* (ghosts). They are heady, carefree, ever happy, most obedient to their Lord and fulfil all his commands and desires. They are in their best and attract ample attention in the marriage of *Devādhideva.* No poet or writer could overlook them while describing that event. *Goswāmī* Tulasīdāsa mentions them thus in his *magnum opus*, *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa* (I. 93)—

"Riding on their different kinds of carriers, dressed variedly, the *Gaṇas* look queer—some devoid of a mouth, some with many mouths; some devoid of legs, some with many legs; some devoid of even eye sockets, some with many eyes; some with stout bodies, some paper thin cadavers; some holy, some most unholy, decorated horribly; with human skulls in their hands, bodies drenched in fresh blood, and faces of asses, dogs, boars, jackals...........They accompanied their Lord—dancing, singing and jogging all the way".

These *Gaṇas* are ugly, terrifying (to look at) mighty, destructive, easily provoked, noisy and disturbing by nature, but they, too, have their own chief to keep them within the fold. This chief is Lord Gaṇeśa, *Sumukha* (good looking) as compared to his charges. Actually, Gaṇeśa is not a person (had it been so, how could it be possible for Lord Śiva and Jagadambā Pārvatī to propitiate Him during their marriage rituals i.e., before He was born), but a post—and such posts go well beyond chronology. He has commanded universal respect and worship since times immemorial. His idols have been found (in excavations) even in far off countries, the latest in the list being Bulgaria. The elephant God is hardly unknown to anyone in the world.

Lord Gaṇeśa is a strange combination of opposites—the largest (elephant) and the smallest (rat) slow moving but not slow-witted, stable but ever active, and so on. Elephant head symbolises concentration and power of recollection (elephant is supposed to be endowed with the best memory), rat symbolises the restlessly busy

human mind, elephant riding on rat stands for weightless wisdom driving and controlling the restive mind, man and animal combining together symbolise balance of nature and as a result, healthy environment, Lambodara is appetite personified; four arms, protection power: tusk, knowledge—capable of piercing through obscurity, ambiguity, doubt and uncertainty; the broken tusk, utilization of the most useless possession (what use is ivory to an elephant? It has virtually become his death warrant; hundreds of them being poached and mercilessly butchered everyday for it only).

Apart from symbolism, these deformities easily illustrate the height to which science had reached in our ancient world; organ transplant is, after all, not a new thing for us. Utilitarian thinking and consumerism has changed us internally. Lack of faith is playing havoc with all our religions and personality. Elephant (the symbol of Lord Gaṇeśa; peacock, the carrier of His younger brother, the commander-in-chief of gods; tiger, the carrier of his mother, tortoise, related to one of the incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu.......all are faced with the horror of extinction. Faith is the first casualty of the inner void. Lack of faith in gods evaporates the consideration for others and makes people run desperately in the desert for the mirage of tranquillity through easy money. Restoration of faith is the only panacea for the strife-torn hearts.

Lord Gaṇeśa is propitiated not only to keep the *Vighnas* (impediments, obstacles, troubles, etc.) away or the successful completion of a task, but also to bestow the necessary wisdom to accomplish it (since he is *Buddhirāśi,* the heap of knowledge). Some devotees are so wonderful that they intrigue the Lord also by their seemingly impracticable demands. *Maharṣi* Kṛṣṇa Dwaipāyana, Veda Vyāsa was one such. He asked the Lord to become His stenographer, that too, for the whole *Mahābhārata* (A gigantic task necessitating the stay of the Lord away from His abode for months together). The Lord did not disappoint him but put forward his condition, "I will leave the moment you stop." Not to be outwitted, the devotee superimposed his own condition,

"O. K. but you won't write without understanding what I mean, and whenever he needed more time for His composition, He fired a brain teaser. The Lord tried his best to outdo his devotee, but failed. Nevertheless he cooperated whole heartedly with the sage poet and, according to one legend, didn't mind even breaking out his tusk and using it like a quill (when the latter went out of order all of a sudden) to keep pace with the poet's imagination.

May this mighty Lord of wisdom make the world wiser and a better place to live in.

There is another type of *Yoga* which is *Samatvayoga* (the *Yoga* of equanimity). An aspirant must look at every object with equanimity in his heart. He should be equal in pleasure and pain, sadness, cheerfulness and fear. He should welcome equally if a disease visits his body or there is an occasion for an enjoyment; he should welcome victory as well as defeat equally. If it is poverty or prosperity or even death, he should always be unperturbed and equanimous to them. When somebody perceives Me in every object of the world equally inside and outside; in the sun, the moon, the water, the fire, Śiva, Śakti and wind god; in the brahmans, a small pond, a great river and a sin-destroying holy place; in Viṣṇu as well as in all gods, *Yakṣas,* serpents, *Gandharvas,* human beings and beasts and birds, he is supposed to be a real knower of *Yoga.*

—*Gaṇeśagītā* (I. 42—46)

"Bhaṇḍārakara is of the opinion that this reputation for wisdom was born of a confusion between Gaṇeśa and the Vedic god of wisdom, Bṛhaspati, while Rao identifies him with the celestial *Guru* Bṛhaspati himself. It is interesting to note here that Bṛhaspati, an important god in the *Ṛgveda* is described as carrying the axe or 'golden hatchet' an attribute particularly ascribed to Gaṇeśa, and that he also was referred to as Gaṇapati."

—*Gaṇeśa (Alice Getty)*

Pūjā Procedure

Finishing the morning duties one should take bath (in a river, lake or any other pond etc.). After that coming home he should again take bath. Then after purifying the place and *Āsana* etc., one should sit facing east or north and make *Tripuṇḍa*. If he is a *Vaiṣṇava* the rules of making *Tripuṇḍa* are as follows—

Taking *Gopī Candana,* the root of *Tulasī* and mud from the ocean or Gaṅgā, paste should be prepared. Remembering the twelve names of Lord Viṣṇu, *Tripuṇḍa* mark should be made as given below—

(1) ॐ केशवाय नमः (forehead)
(2) ॐ नारायणाय नमः (stomach)
(3) ॐ माधवाय नमः (heart)
(4) ॐ गोविन्दाय नमः (throat)
(5) ॐ विष्णवे नमः (right ribs)
(6) ॐ मधुसूदनाय नमः (right arm)
(7) ॐ त्रिविक्रमाय नमः (right ear)
(8) ॐ वामनाय नमः (left ribs)
(9) ॐ श्रीधराय नमः (left arm)
(10) ॐ हृषीकेशाय नमः (left ear)
(11) ॐ पद्मनाभाय नमः (back)
(12) ॐ दामोदराय नमः (hump)

Then *Vedic Sandhyā* should be performed. If he is a Shaivite, Tantric *Sandhyā* is prescribed for him. After performing the *Sandhyopāsana* he should come to the door of the room wherein a particular *Pūjā* is to be performed. Speaking 'अस्त्राय फट्' he should dust out the door in the following order 'ॐ गं गणपतये नमः', 'ॐ दुं दुर्गायै नमः' (right side of the door), 'ॐ वं वटुकाय नमः', 'ॐ क्षं क्षेत्रपालाय नमः' (left

side of the door), 'ॐ सं सरस्वत्यै नमः' (upper portion) and 'ॐ अस्त्राय फट्' (lower portion). After dusting them pronouncing the same *Mantras* every portion should be worshipped. Going to the exact location where *Japa* is to be performed one should take a little dust from the earth and should pronounce the *Mantra* —

गृहीतस्यास्य मंत्रस्य पुरश्चरणसिद्धये।
मयेयं गृह्यते भूमिर्मंत्रोऽयं सिद्धिमाप्नुयात्।।

Pronouncing this *Mantra* the dust should be thrown on the ground. Then ten pieces of 'अश्वत्थ' or 'उदुम्बर' of one cubit large having purified with the *Mantra* 'ॐ नमः सुदर्शनायास्त्राय फट्' one hundred and eight times, should be planted in ten quarters of the place reciting the following *Mantra* —

ॐ ये चात्र विघ्नकर्तारो भुवि दिव्यंतरिक्षगाः।
विघ्नभूताश्च ये चान्ये मम मंत्रस्यसिद्धिषु।।
मयैतत्कीलितं क्षेत्रं परित्यज्य विदूरतः।
अपसर्पंतु ते सर्वे निर्विघ्ना सिद्धिरस्तु मे।।

Then he should worship with five *Pūjā* materials reciting the *Mantra* 'ॐ सुदर्शनायास्त्राय फट्'. Then the ten *Lokapālas* like Indra should be invoked in their particular quarters and worshipped. Then in the centre of *Pūjā* place Gaṇeśa, Kūrma, Ananta, Vasudhā and Kṣetrapālas should be invoked and worshipped. *Bali* should be offered to Kṣetrapāla and Gaṇapati and outside that, *Bhūtabali* also should be given. *Mantra* for *Bali* —

ये रौद्रा रौद्रकर्माणो रौद्रस्थाननिवासिनः।
मातरोऽप्युग्ररूपाश्च गणाधिपतयश्च ये।।
भूचराः खेचराश्चैव तथा चैवांतरिक्षगाः।
ते सर्वे प्रीतमनसः प्रतिगृह्णंत्विमं बलिम्।।

Reciting these *Mantras* in the ten quarters black gram and cooked rice should be offered. Then from the left hand fingers some water for ablution should be offered and some flowers as *Puṣpāñjali* speaking —

ॐ भूतानि यानीह वसंति भूतले बलिं गृहीत्वा विधिवत्प्रयुक्तम्।
संतोषमासाद्य व्रजंतु सर्वे क्षमंतु तान्यत्र नमोऽस्तु तेभ्यः।।

Puṣpāñjali should be offered. Then he should wash his hands and feet.

Then again sprinkling purificatory waters on his body and *Pūjā* materials etc., with the *Mantra*—"ॐ अपवित्रः पवित्रो वा.... बाह्याभ्यंतरः शुचिः," performing *Kūrmaśodhana* etc., sipping water three times with the *Mantra*— "ॐ केशवाय नमः, ॐ नारायणाय नमः, ॐ माधवाय नमः".

Prāṇāyāma—

With the right thumb blocking the right nostril the worshipper should inhale deeply reciting his *Mantra* (of his choice) sixteen times, taking the vital wind to the head and confine it in the thousand-petalled lotus, then with the right ring finger, first finger and thumb blocking both the nostrils he should recite the same *Mantra* for sixty-four times, unblocking the right nostril should recite the same *Mantra* thirty-two times. Then the same process should be done reversely. This way three rounds of *Prāṇāyāma* should be made.

Saṅkalpa—

Mentioning place and time he should say—'(अमुक) गोत्रः (अमुक) शर्माहम् (अमुक) देवताया (अमुक) मंत्रसिद्धिप्रतिबंधकाशेषदुरितक्षयपूर्वकं (अमुक) मंत्रसिद्धिकामोऽद्यारभ्य यावता कालेन सेत्स्यति तावत्कालं (अमुक) मंत्रस्य (अमुक) संख्याकजपतद्दशांशहोमतद्दशांशतर्पणतद्दशांशाभिषेकतद्दशांशब्राह्मणभोजनरूपपुरश्चरणं करिष्ये।'

Making this *Saṅkalpa*, three times, clapping for controlling the quarters—concerned *Mantra* is —'ॐ सुदर्शनायास्त्राय फट्'.

Bhūtaśodhana—

Reciting the following *Mantras* the prayer should be offered to the different deities—

ॐ सूर्यः सोमो यमः कालः संध्या भूतानि पञ्च च।
एते शुभाशुभस्येह कर्मणो मम साक्षिणः॥
भो देव प्राकृतं चित्तं पापाक्रांतमभून्मम।
तन्निस्सारय चित्तान्मे पापं तेऽस्तु नमोनमः॥

Then the worshipper should bow his head speaking—"श्रीगुरुभ्यो नमः (right side), ॐ गणेशाय नमः (left side)."

Then again *Prāṇāyāma* in a slightly different way—

At the stage of *Kumbhaka* one should presume and think seriously that the supreme deity *Kuṇḍalinī* which is having a colour

of *Visatantu* (a fibre-like thing that comes of a lotus-stalk when it is broken and stretched) is rising in *Mūlādhāra* and slowly going upwards piercing through all the intermediary plexus (*Cakras*) and reaching the *Brahmarandhra*. It is taking the *Jīva* in the shape of a bud entering the *Brahmarandhra* through the passage of *Suṣumnā* (medulla- oblongata). While meditating this way he should mentally recite—'ॐ हंस: सोऽहम्' and merge the *Jīva* in *Brahma*. As it is not easy to do so, one should think that such is happening. Then one should meditate that from the feet to the knees is a rectangle where there is a symbol of thunderbolt and it is representing golden earth and the *Bīja Mantra* 'ॐ लं' which is the *Bīja Mantra* of *Pṛthvī* is written there. From the knees to the navel should be presumed to be of a crescent shape where two lotus flowers are located, which are white in colour. This portion is the circle of *Soma* (*Soma Maṇḍala*) and it has the *Bīja* of *Varuṇa* (ॐ वं), from navel upto the location of heart there is a triangle which is marked with *Svastika* (卐). Its colour is red and the deity is *Agni* (fire) and 'ॐ रं' is his *Bīja*. From the heart to the middle of eye-brows, is a circle where there is a lotus with six petals. It is of smoky colour. It is the place of *Vāyu* (wind-god) and its *Bīja* is 'ॐ यं '. From the eye-brows to the *Brahmarandhra* it is a circle of spotlessly clean sky, beautiful to look at, 'ॐ हं' is its *Bīja*. The *Sādhaka* should meditate upon the five elements located in his physical body alongwith their five presiding deities and their respective *Bījas*. After meditating this way certain other things also to be meditated upon. In the earth-circle we should think to be legs (पादेन्द्रिय) ether, smelling organ, smell, Brahmā, *Nivṛtti* (abstention), *Samāna* (one of the five vital winds) and the final destination—these eight things should be meditated. Similarly in the circle of water 'ग्रहण, ग्राह्य, रसना, रस, विष्णु, प्रतिष्ठा and दान'. In the field of fire 'वायु, विसर्ग, विसर्जनीय, चक्षु, रूप, शिव, विद्या, व्यान and ध्येय' should be contemplated over. In the field of *Vāyu* 'नन्द, स्त्री, स्पर्शन (touching), स्पर्श (touch), ईशान, शांत्य, पान and ध्येय'. In the sky 'वाक्, वक्तव्य, वदन, श्रोत्र, शब्द, सदाशिव, शांत्यतीत and प्राण'. This series of objects and happenings should never be

allowed to go out of mind and the fact that the previous object is the generator of the following *Mantra* should never be forgotten. This way starting our journey from the grossest, we should reach the subtlest that is *Brahma* from which the generation process starts and goes on expanding from subtle to gross to grosser to grossest. At the same time we should always be aware of the dissolving process taking place every moment. The effect dissolves and disappears to merge with its immediate cause and eventually after the dissolution of expansive universe into the ultimate reality only *Brahma* remains. This we should always have in our mind to explain this fact. The earth with all its five qualities (शब्द, स्पर्श, रूप, रस and गन्ध) merges into the water element which has got only four qualities, water on its turn merges with the fire element which possesses only three qualities (शब्द, स्पर्श and रूप). The fire on its turn merges into wind having only two qualities (शब्द and स्पर्श). The wind merges into ether having only one quality that is 'शब्द'. The ether merges into 'अहंकार', 'अहंकार' into 'महत्तत्त्व', 'महत्तत्त्व' into 'प्रकृति' and 'प्रकृति' into 'आत्मा'. It is complete dissolution of *Māyā* into *Brahma*. This all we should suppose to be taking place in our body. At the time when the earthly element is merging into the water we should think of 'ॐ लं फट्'. At the merger of water into the fire we should remember 'ॐ बं हुं फट्'. At the merger of fire into the wind we should remember 'ॐ हं हुं फट्'. The merger of wind into the ether should be accompanied with 'ॐ यं हुं फट्' while at the merger of ether into 'अहंकार' 'ॐ हं हुं फट्' should be remembered. We should firmly think that we are the doers of this dissolution process and we are decidedly dissolving this expanded form of *Māyā* into *Brahma* e.g., we ourselves.

Whatever is described above, should be thought over while *Kumbhaka* is being done. At the time of *Pūraka* we should have a supposed vision of sin in an embodied form. While inhaling the breath we should repeat 'ॐ यं' thirty-two times and dry the sin out. Then in the stage of *Kumbhaka* we should repeat the *Bīja* of fire 'ॐ रं' sixty-four times and burn the sins in the embodied form of a man.

At the time of 'रेचक' (exhaling the breath) we should repeat again the *Bīja* of wind 'ॐ यं' sixteen or thirty-two times through the right nostril. We should blow away the ashes of the sins. Then taking those ashes by repeating the *Bīja* of nectar 'ॐ वं' it should be supposed to have made a pulp of those ashes mixed with the nectar. Then mentioning 'ॐ लं' the *Bīja* of earth we should suppose to have made an egg and that egg is golden. Then remembering 'ॐ हं' the *Bīja* of ether we should suppose that the golden egg has been transformed into a mirror glass and in that mirror we should visualise mentally from the head to the toe. And then as a mental projection we should produce ether from that, wind from ether and so on. This will be the horizontal creative process and we should think that "I am the creator, creating the horizontally expanding universe." These are the two transcendental and horizontal processes—dissolution and creation. One is vertical and the other is horizontal. This entire process as a mental projection should be the object of contemplation and meditation. In this way the *Prāṇāyāma* should be converted into a complete *Dhyānayoga*.

With recitation of 'ॐ हंस: सोऽहम्' supposing complete identification of *Brahma* and *Jīva* and taking it to the heart we should contemplate the *Mahāśaktikuṇḍalinī* in *Mūlādhāracakra*. The *Mantra* for meditation—

रक्ताम्भोधिस्थपोतोल्लसदरुणसरोजाधिरूढा कराब्जैः
पाशं कोदण्डमिक्षूद्भवगुणमथ चाप्यंकुशं पञ्चबाणान्।
बिभ्राणासृक्कपालं त्रिनयनलसिता पीनवक्षोरुहाढ्या
देवी बालार्कवर्णा भवतु सुखकरी प्राणशक्तिः परा नः॥

So far it was more or less a purificatory process. Now we should infuse the life of god (of our choice) in our body.

The Process of Svaprāṇapratiṣṭhā—

Viniyoga—

अस्य स्वप्राणप्रतिष्ठामंत्रस्य ब्रह्मविष्णुमहेश्वरा ऋषयः, ॐ ऋग्यजुः सामानिच्छन्दांसि, प्राणशक्तिर्देवता, आं बीजम्, ह्रीं शक्तिः, क्रौं कीलकम् स्वशरीरे (अमुक) देवता प्राणप्रतिष्ठापने विनियोगः।

Nyāsa—

ॐ ब्रह्मविष्णुमहेश्वरऋषिभ्यो नमः शिरसि। ॐ ऋग्यजुः सामच्छंदोभ्यो नमो मुखे। ॐ प्राणशक्त्यै नमः हृदि। ॐ बीजाय नमः गुह्ये। ह्रीं शक्तये नमः पादयोः। क्रौं कीलकाय नमः सर्वांगे।

ॐ ङं कं खं घं गं नाभौ वाय्वग्निवार्भूम्यात्मने हृदयाय नमः। ॐ ञं चं छं झं जं शब्दस्पर्शरूपरसगंधात्मने शिरसे स्वाहा। ॐ णं टं ठं ढं डं श्रोत्रत्वङ्नयनजिह्वाप्राणात्मने शिखायै वषट्। ॐ नं तं थं धं दं वाक्पाणिपायूपस्थात्मने कवचाय हुँ। ॐ मं पं फं भं बं वक्तव्यादानगमनविसर्गानंदात्मने नेत्रत्रयाय वौषट्। ॐ शं यं रं वं लं हं षं क्षं सं लं बुद्धिमनोहंकार चित्तात्मने अस्त्राय फट्।

Then starting from navel to the toes we should entrust the *Pāśa Bīja* 'आं'. From heart to the navel 'ह्रीं' (*Śakti Bīja*), from head to the heart 'क्रौं' *Sṛṇī Bīja*. Then one should touch his heart reciting the following *Mantras*—

ॐ यं त्वगात्मने नमः। ॐ रं असृगात्मने नमः। ॐ लं मांसात्मने नमः। ॐ वं मेदात्मने नमः। ॐ शं अस्थ्यात्मने नमः। ॐ षं मज्जात्मने नमः। ॐ सं शुक्रात्मने नमः। ॐ ह्रौं ओजात्मने नमः। ॐ हं प्राणात्मने नमः। ॐ सं जीवात्मने नमः।

Now one should touch all his limbs from head to the toe pronouncing 'ॐ यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं लं क्षं'. After that salutation should be paid twice speaking 'मण्डूकादिपरतत्त्वांतपीठ देवताभ्यो नमः' and 'ॐ जयादिपीठशक्तिभ्यो नमः'. Then uttering 'ॐ आं ह्रीं क्रौं पीठाय नमः' one should suppose that the goddess and her vital power are present on the seat. *Mantra* for meditation—

पाशं चापासृक्कपाले सृणीषूञ्शूलं हस्तैर्बिभ्रतीं रक्तवर्णम्।
रक्तोदन्वेत्पातरक्तांबुजस्थां देवीं ध्यायेत्प्राण शक्तिं त्रिनेत्राम्॥

Then placing the right hand on the chest we should utter 'ॐ आं ह्रीं क्रौं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं क्षं हं सः ह्रीं ॐ मम शरीरे (अमुक) देवतायाः प्राण इह प्राणः। ॐ आं ह्रीं क्रौं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं क्षं हं सः ह्रीं ॐ मम शरीरे (अमुक) देवतायाः जीव इह स्थितः। ॐ आं ह्रीं क्रौं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं क्षं हं सः ह्रीं ॐ मम शरीरे (अमुक) देवतायाः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि वाङ्मनस्त्वक्चक्षुः श्रोत्रजिह्वाघ्राणपादपायूपस्थानि इहैवागत्य सुखं चिरं तिष्ठन्तु स्वाहा।'

This way *Svaprāṇapratiṣṭhā* should thrice be made and repeating 'ॐ' fifteen times (अनेन मम देहस्य गर्भाधानादिपञ्चदशसंस्कारान् सम्पादयामि) should be said. Thinking ourselves to be the same as *Iṣṭadevatā* we should proceed to worship the deity—

Antarmātṛkā Nyāsa—

Viniyoga—

ॐ अस्यान्तर्मातृकान्यासमंत्रस्य ब्रह्मा ऋषिः, गायत्री छन्दः, मातृकासरस्वती देवता हलो बीजानि, स्वराः शक्तयः, क्षं कीलकम् अखिलाप्तये न्यासे विनियोगः।

Water should be poured on the ground.

Then again Prāṇāyāma—

Filling the left nostril with air pronouncing 'अ इ उ ऋ ऌ ए ऐ ओ औ' now closing both the nostrils the consonants twenty-five in number from 'क' to 'म' should be pronounced at this *Kumbhaka* stage. Then pronouncing 'य र ल व श ष स ह' the blocked wind should be released through the right nostril. Care should be taken that breathing sound might not be heard even by the person himself.

Nyāsa—

ॐ अं ब्रह्मणे ऋषये नमः आं शिरसि। ॐ इं गायत्रीछन्दसे नमः ईं मुखे। ॐ उं सरस्वतीदेवतायै नमः ऊं हृदये। ॐ एं हल्भ्यो बीजेभ्यो नमः ऐं गुह्ये। ॐ ओं स्वरेभ्यः शक्तिभ्यो नमः औं पादयोः। ॐ अं क्षं कीलकाय नमः अः सर्वांगे।

ॐ अं कं खं गं घं ङंआं अंगुष्ठाभ्यां नमः। ॐ इं चं छं जं झं ञं ईं तर्जनीभ्यां नमः। ॐ उं टं ठं डं ढं णं ऊं मध्यमाभ्यां नमः। ॐ एं तं थं दं धं नं ऐं अनामिकाभ्यां नमः। ॐ ओं पं फं बं भं मं औं कनिष्ठिकाभ्यां नमः। ॐ अं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं लं क्षं अः करतलकरपृष्ठाभ्यां नमः।

ॐ अं कं खं गं घं ङंआं हृदयाय नमः। ॐ इं चं छं जं झं ञं ईं शिरसे स्वाहा। ॐ उं टं ठं डं ढं णं ऊं शिखायै वषट्। ॐ एं तं थं दं धं नं ऐं कवचाय हुँ। ॐ ओं पं फं बं भं मं औं नेत्रत्रयाय वौषट्। ॐ अं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं लं क्षं अः अस्त्राय फट्।

Then in the sixteen-petalled lotus located in the throat the sixteen vowels 'ॐ अं आं इं ईं उं ऊं ऋं ॠं ऌं ॡं एं ऐं ओं औं अं अः' one in each serially should be placed. In the twelve-petalled lotus located in the heart the following twelve consonants should be placed—'ॐ कं नमः। ॐ खं नमः। ॐ गं नमः। ॐ घं नमः। ॐ ङं नमः। ॐ चं नमः। ॐ छं नमः। ॐ जं नमः। ॐ झं नमः। ॐ ञं नमः। ॐ टं नमः। ॐ ठं नमः'।

In the navel region in the ten-petalled lotus—'ॐ डं नमः। ॐ ढं नमः। ॐ णं नमः। ॐ तं नमः। ॐ थं नमः। ॐ दं नमः। ॐ धं नमः। ॐ नं नमः। ॐ पं नमः। ॐ फं नमः।'

Then in the phallus in the six-petalled lotus—'ॐ बं नमः। ॐ भं नमः। ॐ मं नमः। ॐ यं नमः। ॐ रं नमः। ॐ लं नमः।'

And finally in the *Mūlādhāra* near anus in four-petalled

lotus—'ॐ वं नमः। ॐ शं नमः। ॐ षं नमः। ॐ सं नमः।', in the forehead in two-petalled lotus—'ॐ हं नमः। ॐ क्षं नमः।'should be placed. Salutation should be paid to the deity in the form of letters.

Bahirmātṛkā Nyāsa—

Viniyoga—

ॐ अस्य श्रीबहिर्मातृकान्यासमंत्रस्य ब्रह्मा ऋषिः, गायत्री छन्दः, मातृका सरस्वती देवता। हलो बीजानि, स्वराः शक्तयः, क्षं कीलकं, अखिलाप्तये न्यासे विनियोगः।

Water may be poured on the ground and again *Prāṇāyāma* should be made. While inhaling through the left nostril 'अ इ उ ऋ ऌ ए ऐ ओ औ' should be pronounced. Then closing both the nostrils twenty-five letters from 'क' to 'म' should be pronounced. Then while exhaling 'य र ल व श ष स ह' should be pronounced.

Nyāsa— (Ṛṣis)—

ॐ अं ब्रह्मणे ऋषये नमः आं शिरसि, ॐ इं गायत्रीछन्दसे नमः ईं मुखे, ॐ उं सरस्वतीदेवतायै नमः ऊं हृदये, ॐ एं हल्भ्यो बीजेभ्यो नमः ऐं गुह्ये, ॐ ओं स्वरेभ्यः शक्तिभ्यो नमः औं पादयोः, ॐ अं क्षं कीलकाय नमः अः सर्वांगे।

Karanyāsa—

ॐ अं कं खं गं घं ङंआं अंगुष्ठाभ्यां नमः, ॐ इं चं छं जं झं ञं ईं तर्जनीभ्यां नमः, ॐ उं टं ठं डं ढं णं ऊं मध्यमाभ्यां नमः, ॐ एं तं थं दं धं नं ऐं अनामिकाभ्यां नमः, ॐ ओं पं फं बं भं मं औं कनिष्ठिकाभ्यां नमः, ॐ अं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं लं क्षं अः करतलकरपृष्ठाभ्यां नमः।

ॐ अं कं खं गं घं ङंआं हृदयाय नमः, ॐ इं चं छं जं झं ञं ईं शिरसे स्वाहा, ॐ उं टं ठं डं ढं णं ऊं शिखायै वषट्, ॐ एं तं थं दं धं नं ऐं कवचाय हुं, ॐ ओं पं फं बं भं मं औं नेत्रत्रयाय वौषट्, ॐ अं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं लं क्षं अः अस्त्राय फट्।

ॐ अं नमः शिरसि (head), ॐ आं नमः मुखे (mouth), ॐ इं नमः दक्षिणनेत्रे (right eye), ॐ ईं नमः वामनेत्रे (left eye), ॐ उं नमः दक्षिणकर्णे (right ear), ॐ ऊं नमः वामकर्णे (left ear), ॐ ऋं नमः दक्षिणनासापुटे (right nostril), ॐ ॠं नमः वामनासापुटे (left nostril), ॐ ऌं नमः दक्षिणकपोले (right cheek), ॐ ॡं नमः वामकपोले (left cheek), ॐ एं नमः ऊर्ध्वोष्ठे (upper lip), ॐ ऐं नमः अधरोष्ठे (lower lip), ॐ ओं नमः ऊर्ध्वदंतपंक्तौ (upper teeth), ॐ औं नमः अधोदंतपंक्तौ (lower teeth), ॐ अं नमः मूर्ध्नि (cerebrum), ॐ अः नमः मुखवृत्ते (between the lips), ॐ कं नमः दक्षिणबाहुमूले (right armpit), ॐ खं नमः दक्षिणकूर्परे (right elbow), ॐ गं नमः दक्षिणमणिबंधे (right wrist),ॐ घं नमः दक्षिणहस्तांगुलिमूले (right roots of fingers), ॐ ङं नमः दक्षिणहस्तांगुल्यग्रे (right finger tips), ॐ चं नमः

वामबाहुमूले (left armpit), ॐ छं नमः वामकूर्परे (left elbow) ॐ जं नमः वाममणिबंधे, (left wrist), ॐ झं नमः वामहस्तांगुलिमूले (left finger-roots) ॐ ञं नमः वामहस्तांगुल्यग्रे (left finger tips), ॐ टं नमः दक्षिणपादमूले (right thigh), ॐ ठं नमः दक्षिणजानुनि (right knee), ॐ डं नमः दक्षिणगुल्फे (right ankle), ॐ ढं नमः दक्षिणपादांगुलिमूले (root of right toes), ॐ णं नमः दक्षिणपादांगुल्यग्रे (right toe-tips), ॐ तं नमः वामपादमूले (left thigh),ॐ थं नमः वामजानुनि (left knee), ॐ दं नमः वामगुल्फे (left ankle) ॐ धं नमः वामपादांगुलिमूले (roots of left toes),ॐ नं नमः वामपादांगुल्यग्रे (the left toe-tips), ॐ पं नमः दक्षिणपार्श्वे (right ribs),ॐ फं नमः वामपार्श्वे (left ribs), ॐ बं नमः पृष्ठे (back), ॐ भं नमः नाभौ (navel), ॐ मं नमः उदरे (stomach), ॐ यं त्वगात्मने नमः हृदि (heart), ॐ रं असृगात्मने नमः दक्षांसे (right shoulder), ॐ लं मांसात्मने नमः ककुदि (hump), ॐ वं मेद आत्मने नमः वामांसे (left shoulder), ॐ शं अस्थ्यात्मने नमः हृदयादिदक्षहस्तांतम् (from heart to the tip of right hand),ॐ षं मज्जात्मने नमः हृदयादिवाम हस्तांतम् (from heart to the left finger tips),ॐ सं शुक्रात्मने नमः हृदयादिदक्षपादांतम् (from heart to the right feet), ॐ हं आत्मने नमः हृदयादिवामपादांतम् (from heart to the left foot), ॐ लं परमात्मने नमः जठरे (stomach), ॐ क्षं प्राणात्मने नमः मुखे (face). The *Mantra* for meditating upon *Mātṛkās*—

पञ्चाशल्लिपिभिर्विभक्तमुखदोःपत्संधिवक्षःस्थलां
भास्वन्मौलिनिबद्धचन्द्रशकलामापीनतुंगस्तनीम्।
मुद्रामक्षगुणं सुदाढ्यं कलशं विद्यां च हस्तांबुजै-
र्बिभ्राणां विशदप्रभां त्रिनयनां वाग्देवतामाश्रये॥

Then the worshipper should get these fifty letters affixed in different limbs of the body while thinking that the creation of the universe is on the way in his body. Every letter sould be preceded either by 'ॐ' or by 'ऐं'. The serial order of the limbs and letters both will be the same. After finishing this the worshipper should think that the process of maintenance of creation is taking place in his body. In this process pronouncing 'टं ठं डं नमः' different limbs to be touched in the same serial order. After that the worshipper should suppose that the creation is on the way of dissolving in his body itself. In this process the serial of letters will be reversed. For example it will start from 'ॐ क्षं नमः ललाटे' and end with 'ॐ अं परमात्मने नमः हृदयादि मस्तकान्तम्.'

Now whatever the main deity is, the object of worshipping the

Kalāmātṛkā Nyāsa of that particular deity should be made. For example if it is Gaṇeśa there should be *Gaṇeśakalāmātṛkā Nyāsa* and so on. Then the *Nyāsa* of concerned *Ṛṣis* and *Mantra* in different six limbs should be made. Meditating upon the main deity saying—'मण्डूकादिपरतत्त्वांतपीठदेवताभ्यो नमः' the worshipper should touch all the limbs of the body.

Pīṭha Pūjā—

On the seat prepared, if it is *Sarvatobhadra* or any other *Maṇḍala,* right in its centre all gods of the *Pīṭha* from *Maṇḍūka* to *Paratattva* should be invoked and seated in the following order—flowers and rice in the hand to his left side he should throw it saying—'श्रीगुरुभ्यो नमः' in the right side 'गणपतये नमः' in the centre (अमुक) i.e., main deity 'देवतायै नमः'. Salutation. In the middle of the seat 'ॐ मं मण्डूकाय नमः, ॐ कं कालाग्निरुद्राय नमः, ॐ अं आधारशक्तये नमः, ॐ कूं कूर्माय नमः, ॐ अं अनंताय नमः, ॐ पृं पृथिव्यै नमः, ॐ क्षीं क्षीरसागराय नमः, ॐ रं रत्नदीपाय नमः, ॐ रं रत्नमण्डपाय नमः, ॐ कं कल्पवृक्षाय नमः, ॐ रं रत्नवेदिकायै नमः, ॐ रं रत्नसिंहासनाय नमः, आग्नेय्याम्—ॐ धं धर्माय नमः, नैर्ऋत्याम्—ॐ ज्ञां ज्ञानाय नमः, वायव्याम्—ॐ वैं वैराग्याय नमः ऐशान्याम्—ॐ ऐं ऐश्वर्य्याय नमः, पूर्वे—ॐ अं धमार्य नमः, दक्षिणे—ॐ अं अज्ञानाय नमः, पश्चिमे—ॐ अं अवैराग्याय नमः, उत्तरे—ॐ अं अनैश्वर्याय नमः पुनः पीठमध्ये—ॐ आं आनन्दकंदाय नमः, ॐ सं सविन्नालाय नमः, ॐ सं सर्वतत्त्वकमलासनाय नमः, ॐ प्रं प्रकृतिमयपत्रेभ्यो नमः, ॐ विं विकारमयकेसरेभ्यो नमः, ॐ पं पञ्चाशद्वर्णाढ्यकर्णिकाभ्यो नमः, ॐ अं अर्क-मण्डलाय द्वादशकलात्मने नमः, ॐ सों सोममण्डलाय षोडशकलात्मने नमः, ॐ वं वह्निमण्डलाय दशकलात्मने नमः, ॐ सं सत्त्वाय नमः, ॐ रं रजसे नमः, ॐ तं तमसे नमः, ॐ आं आत्मने नमः, ॐ पं परमात्मने नमः, ॐ अं अंतरात्मने नमः ॐ ह्रीं ज्ञानात्मने नमः, ॐ मं मायातत्त्वाय नमः, ॐ कं कलातत्त्वाय नमः, ॐ विं विद्यातत्त्वाय नमः ॐ पं परतत्त्वाय नमः।'

To the right side of the main deity the worshipper should draw a triangular diagram and wash it through water and write 'ह्रीं' and should worship with the *Mantra* 'ॐ ह्रीं आधारशक्त्यै नमः'. Then one tripod should be placed in the triangle pronouncing the main *Mantra* followed by 'फट्'. Then that tripod should be worshipped with the main *Mantra* followed by 'नमः'. Then saying—'सुदर्शनायास्त्राय फट्' the copper pitcher cleaned and washed, should be placed on that stand with both of his hands. The pitcher should be covered with red clothes and red flowers. Then pronouncing main *Mantra* with

'नमः' in the end, the pitcher should be filled with water. Then saying—'ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः वरुण इहागच्छ इह तिष्ठ' he should invoke Varuṇa, the deity of *Kalaśa*, and he should meditate that his desired deity is bodily present in that *Kalaśa* and should worship him with sandal paste, rice and flowers etc.

Śaṅkhasthāpana—

To the left side of deity the worshipper should again draw a triangular diagram and wash it with water, writing 'ह्रीं' in it, worshipping with the *Mantra* 'ॐ ह्रीं आधारशक्त्यै नमः' speaking the main *Mantra* with 'फट्' in the end he should place a tripod in the triangle saying—'वह्निमण्डलाय दशकलात्मने शंखपात्रासनाय नमः'. He should worship the tripod itself and then out of that diagram in all the ten quarters he should worship ten *Agnikalās* pronouncing the following ten *Mantras*—

(1) ॐ यं धूम्रार्च्चिषे नमः।
(2) ॐ रं ऊष्मायै नमः।
(3) ॐ लं ज्वलिन्यै नमः।
(4) ॐ वं ज्वालिन्यै नमः।
(5) ॐ शं विस्फुलिङ्गिन्यै नमः।
(6) ॐ षं सुश्रियै नमः।
(7) ॐ सं सुरूपायै नमः।
(8) ॐ हं कपिलायै नमः।
(9) ॐ लं हव्यवाहायै नमः।
(10) ॐ क्षं कव्यवाहायै नमः।

Speaking 'ॐ क्लीं महाजलचराय हुं फट् स्वाहा पाञ्चजन्याय नमः'. He should place that already washed conch on that tripod with opening side up and worship it. Then within the same conch he should worship the sun god saying—'ॐ अं सूर्यमण्डलाय द्वादशकलात्मने शंखपात्राय नमः'. With the same *Mantra* the conch also should be worshipped. Supposing that all the twelve *Kalās* of sun god are stationed in the conch, he should worship them one by one in an order anticlockwise.

ॐ कं भं तपिन्यै नमः, ॐ खं बं तापिन्यै नमः, ॐ गं फं धूम्रायै नमः, ॐ घं पं मरीच्यै नमः, ॐ ङं नं ज्वालिन्यै नमः, ॐ चं धं रुच्यै नमः, ॐ छं दं सुषुम्नायै नमः, ॐ जं थं भोगदायै नमः, ॐ झं तं विश्वायै नमः, ॐ ञं णं बोधिन्यै नमः, ॐ टं ढं धारिण्यै नमः, ॐ ठं डं क्षमायै नमः।

Pronouncing all the fifty-one letters in reverse order as 'ॐ क्षं लं हं षं शं सं वं लं रं यं मं भं बं फं पं नं धं दं थं तं णं ढं डं ठं टं ञं झं जं छं चं ङं घं गं खं कं अं: अं औं ओं ऐं एं ॡं ऌं ॠं ऋं ऊं उं ईं इं आं अं' with the main *Mantra* ending with 'नमः' water should be poured into the conch. Pronouncing 'ॐ सोममण्डलाय षोडशकलात्मने शंखपात्रामृताय नमः' the conch should be worshipped with all the *Pūjā* materials thinking that sixteen *Kalās* of moon are located in the water. The *Mantra* for worshipping sixteen *Kalās* are as—

ॐ अं अमृतायै नमः, ॐ आं मानदायै नमः, ॐ इं पूषायै नमः, ॐ ईं तुष्ट्यै नमः, ॐ उं पुष्ट्यै नमः, ॐ ऊँ वृत्त्यै नमः, ॐ ॠं धृत्यै नमः, ॐ ॠं शशिन्यै नमः, ॐ ऌं चन्द्रिकायै नमः, ॐ ॡं कांत्यै नमः, ॐ एं ज्योत्स्नायै नमः, ॐ ऐं श्रियै नमः, ॐ ओं प्रीत्यै नमः, ॐ औं अंगदायै नमः, ॐ अं पूर्णायै नमः, ॐ अः पूर्णामृतायै नमः।

With the *Mantra*—

ॐ शंखादौ चन्द्रदैवत्यं कुक्षौ वरुणदेवता।
पृष्ठे प्रजापतिश्चैवमग्रे गङ्गा सरस्वती॥
त्रैलोक्ये यानि तीर्थानि वासुदेवस्य चाज्ञया।
शंखे तिष्ठन्ति विप्रेन्द्र तस्माच्छंखं प्रपूजयेत्॥

Some water should be sprinkled over the conch. Salutation to the conch should be made speaking—

ॐ त्वं पुरा सागरोत्पन्नो विष्णुना विधृतः करे।
निर्मितः सर्वेदेवैश्च पाञ्चजन्य नमोस्तु ते॥

Then *Śaṅkha Gāyatrī* should be repeated eight times. It is as— 'ॐ पाञ्चजन्याय विद्महे पावमानाय धीमहि तन्नः शंखः प्रचोदयात्'. Then *Śaṅkhamudrā* should be shown to the conch. After that before the deity 'अर्घ्यपात्र' (utensil for ablution), to his right side 'प्रोक्षणीपात्र' should be placed. (While worshipping Lord Śiva or Sūrya copper-vessel should be used), to the left side of अर्घ्यपात्र—'श्रीपात्र, गुरुपात्र, देवपात्र, शक्तिपात्र, योगिनीपात्र, भोगपात्र, वीरपात्र, आत्मपात्र and बलिपात्र'. This way nine utensils in all. Whether they are metallic or leaf-made, is immaterial. To the right side of deity there should be four utensils for 'पाद्य, अर्घ्य, आचमनीय and मधुपर्क'. If it is not possible only conch can be sufficient.

Ghaṇṭā Sthāpana—

To the right side of deity a bell should be placed and before worshipping the bell the worshipper should ring it. With the

following *Mantra* the *Pūjā* material should be offered to the bell one by one saying—'ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः गरुडाय नमः आवाहयामि सर्वोपचारार्थं गंधाक्षतपुष्पाणि समर्पयामि नमस्करोमि.' After that salutation should be made. With the *Mantra*— 'जगद्धूनिमंत्रमातः स्वाहा' गरुड, invoked in the bell, should be worshipped with available *Pūjā* materials. Taking 'गन्ध, अक्षत, पुष्प' etc., in his right hand reciting the main *Mantra* with 'नमः' in the end sprinkling water over all the *Pūjā* materials. In the canopy a big water vessel, umbrella and chowry should be placed to the left side of worshipper. To the right side of deity an earthen lamp full of ghee and to the left another one with oil should be placed. The wicks should be made of thread folded as many times as there are letters in the *Mantra* (if there are six letters in the *Mantra* the thread should be sixfold braided together). Pronouncing 'ॐ' the lamp should be lighted and worshipped with *Sudarśana Mantra* i. e.,'ॐ रां रीं रूं रैं रौं रः सहस्रार हुं फट् स्वाहा.' The oil-lamp should be worshipped with *Pāśupata Mantra* i. e., 'ॐ श्लीं पशु ॐ फट् स्वाहा'. Then the flames of both the lamps should be touched with two hands and the following *Mantra* should be pronounced once—'ॐ घोराय घोरतमाय महारौद्राय वीरभद्राय ज्वालामालिने सर्वदुष्टोपसंहर्त्रे हुं फट् स्वाहा'. The worshipper should presume that he is absorbing the flame in himself. After that he should purify speech, body and mind—'ॐ हुं फट् स्वाहा' (mouth), 'ॐ रक्ष रक्ष फट् स्वाहा' (heart). Then taking flowers and sandal in right hand crushing it with both the hands taking again flowers and rice, should pronounce this *Mantra*—

ते सर्वे विलयं यांतु ये मां हिंसंति हिंसकाः।
मृत्युरोगभयक्लेशा पतंतु रिपुमस्तके॥

It should be thrown in the north-east at some distance and then hands must be washed. Then in the 'कूर्मचक्र' where the mouth of tortoise fell (in the column of his name's initial letter) he should place the lamp. Then fire should be placed on the *Vedī* or *Kuṇḍa* with reciting necessary *Mantras*.

Prāṇa Pratiṣṭhā—

Saṅkalpa—

Mentioning place and time 'मम (अमुक) देवता नूतनयन्त्रे (मूर्तौ) प्राणप्रतिष्ठां करिष्ये'.

Viniyoga—

'अस्य श्रीप्राणप्रतिष्ठामंत्रस्य ब्रह्मविष्णुमहेश्वरा ऋषयः। ऋग्यजुःसामानि छंदांसि। क्रियामयवपुः प्राणाख्या देवता। आं बीजम्। ह्रीं शक्तिः। क्रौं कीलकम्। अस्मिन्नूतनयंत्रे (मूर्तौ) प्राणप्रतिष्ठापने विनियोगः।' the water should be poured on the ground. Covering the *Yantra* with the hands 'ॐ आं ह्रीं क्रौं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं सः सोऽहं अस्यामुकदेवतासपरिवारयंत्रस्य प्राणा इह प्राणाः।'. Again 'ॐ आं ह्रीं कौं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं सः सोऽहं अस्याऽमुकदेवतासपरिवारयंत्रस्य जीव इह स्थितः।'. Again 'ॐ आं ह्रीं क्रौं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं सः सोऽहं अस्यामुकदेवतासपरिवारयंत्रस्य सर्वेन्द्रियाणि इह स्थितानि।'. Again 'ॐ आं ह्रीं क्रौं यं रं लं वं शं षं सं हं सः सोऽहं अमुकदेवतासपरिवारयंत्रस्य वाङ्मनस्त्वक्चक्षुः श्रोत्रजिह्वाघ्राणपाणिपादपायूपस्थानि इहैवागत्य सुखं चिरं तिष्ठंतु स्वाहा।'.

Then reciting 'मनोजूतिर्जूषता सुप्रतिष्ठा प्रतिष्ठा'. Then 'प्रणव' (ॐ) should be repeated fifteen times thinking that by reciting 'ॐ' fifteen times I am performing fifteen sacraments. Then reciting one hundred and eight times—'ॐ यंत्रराजाय विद्महे महायंत्राय धीमहि तन्नो यंत्रः प्रचोदयात्'. Then the main worship of the deity should start.

—*Mantra Mahārṇava*

Different Forms of Gaṇeśa Gāyatrī

(1) लम्बोदराय विद्महे महोदराय धीमहि। तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्॥

—*Agni Purāṇa*

(2) महोत्कटाय विद्महे वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि। तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्॥

—*Agni Purāṇa*

(3) एकदन्ताय विद्महे वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि। तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्॥

—*Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣa*

(4) तत्कराटाय विद्महे हस्तिमुखाय धीमहि। तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्॥

—*Maitrāyaṇīya Saṁhitā*

(5) तत्पुरुषाय विद्महे वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि। तन्नो दन्ती प्रचोदयात्॥

—*Taittirīyāraṇyaka, Nārāyaṇopaniṣad*

Prayers

Vaidika —

Gaṇapati Prayer in Vedas

नि षु सीद गणपते गणेषु त्वामाहुर्विप्रतमं कवीनाम्।
न ऋते त्वत्क्रियते किं चनारे महामर्कं मघवञ्चित्रमर्च।।

(*Ṛgveda* X. 112. 9)

"O lord of *Gaṇas,* take your seat amongst the *Gaṇas* and listen to the prayer offered to you. You are known to be the greatest scholar amongst the scholars. Without you nothing can be performed, close or far. O Indra, the wealthiest, you are great, worth worshipping, worth being prayed to. Kindly make our prayers multifaceted."

ॐ गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे कविं कवीनामुपमश्रवस्तमम्।
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत आ नः शृण्वन्नूतिभिः सीद सादनम्।।

(*Ṛgveda* II. 23.1)

"We invoke You, the Supreme Lord, suprascient amongst preceptors, who is the head of the common folk, a Supreme seer amongst seers, superb in glory and the Supreme Lord of the hymns. Listening to us may You occupy this seat at this place of worship coming with all Your protective powers."

उत्तिष्ठ ब्रह्मणस्पते देवयन्तस्त्वेमहे।
उप प्र यन्तु मरुतः सुदानव इन्द्र प्राशूर्भवा सचा।।

(*Ṛgveda* I. 40. 1)

"O lord of the knowledge, kindly get up. We, desirous of attaining godhood, pray to you. The best among the donors, the brave *Maruts* may come alongwith you. O Indra, come alongwith other gods and drink *Soma.*"

प्रैतु ब्रह्मणस्पतिः प्र देव्येतु सूनृता।
अच्छा वीरं नर्यं पंक्तिराधसं देवा यज्ञं नयन्तुनः।।

(*Ṛgveda* I. 40. 3)

"The wise Brahmaṇaspati may come to us. The goddess—the embodiment of truth—may also come. You bring that brave warrior to us who is benevolent to the common people and who commands respect from the society"

प्र नूनं ब्रह्मणस्पतिर्मन्त्रं वदत्युक्थ्यम्।
यस्मिन्निन्द्रो वरुणो मित्रो अर्यमा देवा ओकांसि चक्रिरे।।

(*Ṛgveda* I. 40.5)

"In whom gods like Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryamā made their abode. Such Brahmaṇaspati assuredly recites the purifying *Mantra*."

गणानां त्वां गणपतिँ हवामहे प्रियाणां त्वा प्रियपतिँ हवामहे
निधीनां त्वा निधिपतिँ हवामहे वसो मम।
आहमजानि गर्भधमा त्वमजासि गर्भधम्।।

(*Yajurveda* 23. 19)

"We pray to you O sustainer of the *Gaṇas,* we invoke you O protector of the nears and dears. We invoke you O protector of the treasures and prosperity. O establisher of the entire cosmos, the Lord Supreme, you are mine. Make me capable of knowing you as the sustainer of *Hiraṇyagarbha* and the three-moded *Prakṛti* bacause like a womb you hold the entire universe in you and the universe emanates from you."

नमो गणेभ्यो गणपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो व्रातेभ्यो व्रातपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो।
नमो गृत्सेभ्यो गृत्सपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो विरूपेभ्यो विश्वरूपेभ्यश्च वो नमः।।

(*Yajurveda* 16. 25)

"Obeisance to *Gaṇas* and the leader of the *Gaṇas.* Obeisance to the special groups or the tribes and to the lord of them. Obeisance to the wise and the protector of wise persons. Obeisance to those having different forms and to Rudradeva who himself holds innumerable forms."

Paurāṇika—

Saṅkaṭanāśanam Gaṇeśa Stotram

Below is given a *Stotra* for eulogizing Lord Gaṇeśa. It is one of the most effective and powerful *Stotras*, a bestower of all our desires secular or spiritual. It was preached by *Devarṣi* Nārada. As the *Phalaśruti* says, by reciting it and remembering the twelve names of Lord Gaṇeśa contained therein thrice a day, one can expect his life to be free from all obstacles and he may attain all the four objects of human life. If a person writes it eight times and gives it to eight pure and learned brahmins alongwith other charitable goods, he is sure to achieve knowledge. By a regular recitation for six months, one gets all his desires fulfilled and after a year he achieves perfection.

Nārada spoke—

प्रणम्य शिरसा देवं गौरीपुत्रं विनायकम्।
भक्तावासं स्मरेन्नित्यमायुः कामार्थसिद्धये।।

"Saluting with bowing head, one should daily remember Lord Vināyaka, the son of mother goddess Pārvatī, the final abode of devotees; for having a long life, wealth and *Kāma* (worldly pleasures)."

प्रथमं वक्रतुण्डं च एकदन्तं द्वितीयकम्।
तृतीयं कृष्णपिङ्गाक्षं गजवक्त्रं चतुर्थकम्।।

"Out of His twelve names Vakratuṇḍa (with a twisted trunk), Ekadanta (one-tusked), Kṛṣṇapiṅgākṣa (having blackishly tawny eyes), Gajānana (elephant-faced).

लम्बोदरं पञ्चमं च षष्ठं विकटमेव च।
सप्तमं विघ्नराजं च धूम्रवर्णं तथाष्टमम्।।

"Lambodara (having a large belly), Vikaṭa (most formidable),

Vighnarāja (the lord of obstacles), Dhūmravarṇa (of smoky hue)."

नवमं भालचन्द्रं च दशमं तु विनायकम्।
एकादशं गणपतिं द्वादशं तु गजाननम्।।

"Bhālacandra (having crescent moon on the forehead), Vināyaka (the leader), Gaṇapati (the lord of hosts) and finally Gajānana."

द्वादशैतानि नामानि त्रिसन्ध्यं यः पठेन्नरः।
न च विघ्नभयं तस्य सर्वसिद्धिकरं प्रभो।।

"One who recites thrice a day these twelve names, will never have any fear from obstacles. He will get all his desires fulfilled."

विद्यार्थी लभते विद्यां धनार्थी लभते धनम्।
पुत्रार्थी लभते पुत्रान्मोक्षार्थी लभते गतिम्।।

"A student can earn learning and one desirous of wealth can have sufficient wealth, one who desires a son can have son and a *Sādhaka* can achieve the self-realization."

जपेद्गणपतिस्तोत्रं षड्भिर्मासैः फलं लभेत्।
संवत्सरेण सिद्धिं च लभते नात्र संशयः।।

"Reciting this *Stotra* for six months one gets his desired fruits and at the end of a year the devotee can have undoubtedly complete perfection."

अष्टभ्यो ब्राह्मणेभ्यश्च लिखित्वा यः समर्पयेत्।
तस्य विद्या भवेत्सर्वा गणेशस्य प्रसादतः।।

"One who writes this *Stotra* eight times and donates to eight scholarly brahmans can have all knowledge by the grace of Lord Gaṇeśa."

रक्ष स्वधर्मं धर्मिष्ठे धर्मज्ञे धर्मकर्मणि।
सर्वेषाञ्च भवेद्रक्षा स्वधर्मपरिपालने॥
यश्च केन निमित्तेन न धर्मं परिरक्षति।
धर्मे नष्टे च धर्मज्ञे तस्य धर्मो विनश्यति॥

"Always protect your *Dharma*. If everybody follows his *Dharma*, the entire society becomes safe and secure. If for some reasons anybody fails to protect his *Dharma*, his *Dharma* is destroyed and everything becomes futile."

—*Brahmavaivarta, Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa* (VII. 29-30)

Gaṇeśastavarāja Stotram

This *Stotra* has been taken from *Rudrayāmalatantra*. It is bestower of accomplishment in a very short period and requires neither *Nyāsa* nor *Saṁskāra* nor *Homa* (putting oblation in the sacred fire) nor *Tarpaṇa* nor *Mārjana*. It requires only muttering of it for fifty thousand times. Of course every prescribed rule is to be followed in the worship of Lord Gaṇeśa.

Viniyoga—

अस्य श्रीगणेशस्तवराजमन्त्रस्य भगवान् सदाशिव ऋषिः, अनुष्टुप् छन्दः श्रीमहागणपतिर्देवता, श्रीमहागणपतिप्रीत्यर्थे जपे विनियोगः॥

"This *Stotra* has *Bhagavān* Sadāśiva as its *Ṛṣi, Anuṣṭupa* meter and Śrī Mahāgaṇapati as *Devatā*. It's purport is to appease the Lord Gaṇeśa."

विनायकैकभावनासमर्चनासमर्पितं
प्रमोदकैः प्रमोदकैः प्रमोदमोदमोदकम्।
यदर्पितं सदर्पितं नवान्नधान्यनिर्मितं
न कण्डितं न खण्डितं न खण्डमण्डनं कृतम्॥ १॥

"If somebody offers to Lord Vināyaka newly harvested foodgrains, that which the chaff is not separated from, nor is it broken, with all his faith and devotion; preparing *Modakas* (sweet rice ball) out of freshly obtained rice, is for the pleasure of Lord Vināyaka and He likes and appreciates it very much."

सजातिकृद्विजातिकृत्स्वनिष्ठभेदवर्जितं
निरञ्जनं च निर्गुणं निराकृतिं ह्यनिष्क्रियम्।
सदात्मकं चिदात्मकं सुखात्मकं परं पदं
भजामि तं गजाननं स्वमाययात्तविग्रहम्॥ २॥

"He is above and transcendental to the idea of family, race or clan, is stationed in His own self. Untainted, devoid of the three

modes of matter, formless and actionless. He is ever existent, ever conscious and ever blissful. I bow down to the feet of that Gajānana who, with the help of His *Māyā* assumes any form He pleases."

गणाधिप त्वमष्टमूर्तिरीशसूनुरीश्वर-
स्त्वमम्बरं च शम्बरं धनञ्जयः प्रभञ्जनः।
त्वमेव दीक्षितः क्षितिर्निशाकरः प्रभाकर-
श्चराचरप्रचारहेतुरन्तरायशान्तिकृत् ॥ ३ ॥

"O Lord Gaṇeśa, You have eight forms (five great elements, mind, intellect and ego). You are the beloved son of the Lord Śaṅkara, You are the ether, You are the cloud, You are Dhanañjaya and You are the cyclonic wind. You are initiated. You are the earth, moon and sun. You are the root cause. Due to You only, all the movable and immovable creatures move. You are the pacifier of hurdles and obstacles."

अनेकदं तमालनीलमेकदन्तसुन्दरं
गजाननं नमोऽगजाननामृताब्धिचन्दिरम्।
समस्तवेदवादसत्कलाकलापमन्दिरं
महान्तरायकृत्तमोऽर्कमाश्रितोन्दुरुं परम्॥ ४ ॥

"You are bestower of everything to Your devotee. I offer my obeisance to the charming and handsome one-tusked Gajānana who is of a blue hue like *Tamāla*. You are like a moon coming out of the ocean of nectar. O Gajānana, You are the repose of all Vedic knowledge and all fine arts. You are the creator of obstacles. You are having a mouse as Your vehicle. My obeisance to You."

सरत्नहेमघण्टिकानिनादनूपुरस्वनै-
र्मृदङ्गतालनादभेदसाधनानुरूपतः ।
धिगिद्धिगिद्धिगित्तथोङ्गथोङ्गथैतिशब्दतो
विनायकः शशाङ्कशेखरः प्रहृष्य नृत्यति॥ ५ ॥

"In Your feet there are ringing golden bells studded with precious gems and You dance along with the tune of *Mṛdaṅga* (a kind of kettledrum). This is all in accordance with Your *Sādhanā*—the spiritual discipline. There is a sound, *Dhig*, *Dhig* coming out of the musical instruments and from the movements of Your body and Your dance in a mood of supernatural joy. O one, having

moon on the forehead."

सदा नमामि नायकैकनायकं विनायकं
कलाकलापकल्पनानिदानमादिपूरुषम् ।
गणेश्वरं गुणेश्वरं महेश्वरात्मसंभवं
स्वपादपद्मसेविनामपारवैभवप्रदम् ॥ ६ ॥

"I pay my homage to the leader of leaders, expert in all fine arts and very rich in imaginations, who is the eternal primal person, who is the lord of the hosts, lord of the three modes of *Prakṛti* as well as all virtuous attributes, the son of Lord Śaṅkara and a bestower of unlimited wealth and glory upon those who serve His lotus-feet."

भजे प्रचण्डतुन्दिलं सदन्दशूकभूषणं
सनन्दनादिवन्दितं समस्तसिद्धसेवितम्।
सुरासुरौघयोः सदा जयप्रदं भयप्रदं
समस्तविघ्नघातिनं स्वभक्तपक्षपातिनम्॥ ७ ॥

"I adore Lord Gaṇeśa who has a large bulging belly, adorning Himself with serpents, adored by the sages Sanandana, Sanaka etc., served by all the *Siddhas*; one who bestows victory to gods as well as demons and at the same time a source of fear to both, who destroys all sorts of obstacles and is very kind and favourable to His devotees."

कराम्बुजातकङ्कणः पदाब्ज किङ्किणीगणो
गणेश्वरो गुणार्णवः फणीश्वराङ्गभूषणः।
जगत्रयान्तरायशान्तिकारकोऽस्तु तारको
भवार्णवस्थघोरदुर्गहा चिदेकविग्रहः॥ ८ ॥

"I pay my obeisance to Lord Gaṇeśa who has got bracelets on His lotus-like arms, beautiful bells on His lotus like feet, the lord of hosts, an ocean of all pious attributes, who has serpents on His body as ornaments, who is capable of removing all obstacles of all the three worlds, who has His body made of only pure consciousness, who is expert in smashing every evil element of the *Saṁsāra*. He be my liberator."

यो भक्तिप्रवणश्चराचरगुरोः स्तोत्रं गणेशाष्टकं
शुद्धः संयतचेतसा यदि पठेन्नित्यं त्रिसन्ध्यं पुमान्।

तस्य श्रीरतुला स्वसिद्धिसहिता श्रीशारदा सर्वदा
स्यातां तत्परिचारिके किल तदा काः कामनानां कथाः ॥ ९ ॥

"One who is sincerely devoted to Lord Gaṇeśa, the preceptor of the entire universe, and recites these eight verses relating to Lord Gaṇeśa with physical and mental purity thrice a day, he is sure to acquire wealth unequalled. Lakṣmī (the goddess of wealth) and Sarasvatī (the goddess of learning) will serve him as his maid servants and what to talk of his trifle desires to be fulfilled."

इति श्रीरुद्रयामले गणेशस्तवराजः सम्पूर्णः ॥

इत्थं विष्णुशिवादितत्त्वतनवे श्रीवक्रतुण्डाय हुं-
काराक्षिप्त समस्तदैत्यपृतनाव्राताय दीप्तत्विषे।
आनन्दैकरसावबोधलहरीविध्वस्तसर्वोर्मये
सर्वत्र प्रथमानमुग्धमहसे तस्मै परस्मै नमः ॥

"My salutations to that Supreme Person who has *Viṣṇu Tattva* and *Śiva Tattva* etc., as his body; who drove away the demon armies simply with his roars; whose body's hue is extremely white; who destroyed all other waves of emotions by the wave of his blissful knowledge and whose splendour is all-pervading."

—*Mahāgaṇapati Stotram* (14)

यो दूर्वाङ्कुरैर्यजति स वैश्रवणोपमो भवति। यो लाजैर्यजति स यशोवान् भवति, स मेधावान् भवति। यो मोदकसहस्त्रेण यजति स वाञ्छितफलमवाप्नोति। यः साज्यसमिद्भिर्यजति स सर्वं लभते स सर्वं लभते। अष्टौ ब्राह्मणान् सम्यग् ग्राहयित्वा सूर्यवर्चस्वी भवति।

"One who worships Gaṇeśa with *Dūrvā*, becomes like Kubera. He who worships Him with parched paddy becomes famous and brilliant. He who worships Him with one thousand *Modakas* gets his desire fulfilled. He who offers oblation of ghee and *Samidhā* (a piece of *Palāśa* wood) gets everything. He who donates to eight brahmans the copies of this *Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣa Upaniṣad* becomes effulgent like sun."

—*Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣopaniṣad*

Mayūreśa Stotram

परब्रह्मरूपं चिदानन्दरूपं सदानन्दरूपं सुरेशं परेशम्।
गुणाब्धिं गुणेशं गुणातीतमीशं मयूरेशमाद्यं नताः स्मो नताः स्मः ॥

"Our salutations to Lord Mayūreśa again and again, who is the Supreme Reality; *Parabrahma* the Absolute; consciousness and bliss personified; always blissful; the lord of gods; the Supreme Lord; the ocean of all benign qualities; the lord of *Guṇas* at the same time transcendent to the three modes or qualities of *Prakṛti*."

जगद्वन्द्यमेकं परोंकारमेकं गुणानां परं कारणं निर्विकल्पम्।
जगत्पालकं हारकं तारकं तं मयूरेशमाद्यं नताः स्मो नताः स्मः ॥

"Our salutations to Mayūreśa, the primeval deity worth adoring by the universe and the only Supreme manifestation of *Oṁkāra;* the absolute cause of all the causes and qualities; undifferentiated; the sustainer and the annihilator of the universe and the liberator of the devotees."

महादेवसूनुं महादैत्यनाशं महापूरुषं सर्वदा विघ्ननाशम्।
सदा भक्तपोषं परं ज्ञानकोशं मयूरेशमाद्यं नताः स्मो नताः स्मः ॥

"Our salutations again and again to the Lord Mayūreśa, the son of the great Lord Śiva; destroyer of great demons; the Supreme Person; always destroying the obstacles, always protecting the devotees, a treasure of the Supreme Knowledge."

अनादिं गुणादिं सुरादिं शिवाया महातोषदं सर्वदा सर्ववन्द्यम्।
सुरार्यन्तकं भुक्तिमुक्तिप्रदं तं मयूरेशमाद्यं नताः स्मो नताः स्मः ॥

"Our salutations again and again to Lord Mayūreśa, who is beginningless but the very beginning of the three modes; the original fountain of the gods; who brings satisfaction and happiness to mother goddess Pārvatī; adorable by all; killer of demons; bestower of prosperity and deliverance to His devotees."

परं मायिनं मायिनामप्यगम्यं मुनिध्येयमाकाशकल्पं जनेशम्।
असंख्यावतारं निजाज्ञाननाशं मयूरेशमाद्यं नताः स्मो नताः स्मः॥

"Our salutations again and again to Lord Mayūreśa, who is Supreme Lord of *Māyā* but beyond the approach of even the greatest possessors of *Māyā* who is always meditated upon by the *Munis;* who is all pervasive like ether; who is the Lord of all creatures; who takes innumerable incarnations and who destroys all ignorance obscuring the real nature of the Supreme."

अनेकक्रियाकारणं श्रुत्यगम्यं त्रयीबोधितानेककर्मादिबीजम्।
क्रियासिद्धिहेतुं सुरेन्द्रादिसेव्यं मयूरेशमाद्यं नताः स्मो नताः स्मः॥

"Our obeisance again and again to Lord Mayūreśa, who is the ultimate cause of all activity; whose real nature is indescribable even to the *Vedas*; who is the ultimate seed of actions described and prescribed in the *Vedas*; who is the ultimate factor in providing accomplishments of the actions performed; and to whom the gods like Indra always offer their services."

महाकालरूपं निमेषादिरूपं कलाकल्परूपं सदागम्यरूपम्।
जनज्ञानहेतुं नृणां सिद्धिदं तं मयूरेशमाद्यं नताः स्मो नताः स्मः॥

"Our obeisance again and again to Lord Mayūreśa, who is *Mahākāla*—the cause of time and pervading even minutes and seconds and every moment; who appears in the forms of *Kalā* and *Kalpa*; whose form and nature is really unimaginable; who is the real cause of the knowledge obtained by people; and who is the bestower of all accomplishments of the devotees."

महेशादिदेवैः सदा सेव्यपादं सदा रक्षकं योगिनां चित्स्वरूपम्।
सदा कामरूपं कृपाम्भोनिधिं तं मयूरेशमाद्यं नताः स्मो नताः स्मः॥

"Our obeisance again and again to Lord Mayūreśa, whose feet, Lord Śiva etc., always adore; who always protects the *Yogī's;* who is embodiment of consciousness; who is capable of assuming any form He may wish; and who is the ocean of mercy and compassion."

सदा भक्तानां त्वं प्रसभपरमानन्दसुखदो
यतस्त्वं लोकानां परमकरुणामाशु तनुषे।
षडूर्मीणां वेगं सुरवर सदा नाशय विभो
ततोऽमुक्तिःश्लाघ्या तव भजनतोऽनन्तसुखदात्॥

"O the superiormost among the gods, You always provide happiness and comfort even unwanted because You always expand Your mercy and compassion over all the creatures of the universe at once. O Lord, there are six very uncontrollable waves of lust and anger etc., in me. Kindly conquer them for me. Even the final liberation is not at all desirable in comparison to the devotion to Your feet."

किमस्माभिः स्तोत्रं गजवदन ते शक्यमतुलं
विधातुं वा रम्यं गुणनिधिरसि प्रेम जगताम्।
न चास्माकं शक्तिस्तव गुणगणं वर्णितुमहो
त्वदीयोऽयं वारांनिधिरिव जगत्सर्जनविधिः॥

"O Lord Mayūreśa, we are quite incapable of singing beautiful praises to You. You are a treasure-house of all the good qualities and a befitting object of love to the entire world. We have no power to describe competently the best qualities in You. This process of creating and dissolving the universe is like an unending ocean."

(*Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* II. 123. 40—49)

इदं यः पठते स्तोत्रं स कामाँल्लभतेऽखिलान्।
सहस्रावर्तनात्कारागृहस्थं मोचयेज्जनम्।
अयुतावर्तनान्मर्त्योऽसाध्यं यत्साधयेत्क्षणात्॥

"He who recites this *Stotra*, attains all his desires. Who recites one thousand times gets himself freed from imprisonment. By reciting it ten thousand times one may accomplish an object which is otherwise impossible."

सर्वत्र जयमाप्नोति श्रियं परमदुर्लभाम्।
पुत्रवान् धनवांश्चैव वशतामखिलं नयेत्॥

"One who recites it gets victory always and everywhere. Lakṣmī, most difficult to attain to, comes to him. He gets worthy sons and mundane prosperity and overpowers everybody."

(*Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* II. 123. 55—57)

Classical—
Prayer to Lord Gaṇeśa by Maharṣi Vālmīki

चतु:षष्टिकोट्याख्यविद्याप्रदं त्वां सुराचार्यविद्याप्रदानापदानम्।
कठाभीष्टविद्यार्पकं दन्तयुग्मं कविं बुद्धिनाथं कवीनां नमामि॥ १॥

"My obeisance to Lord Gaṇeśa, who is bestower of sixty-four crore *Vidyās* (different branches of knowledge), who is having two tusks, who imparted knowledge even to Bṛhaspati, the preceptor of gods, who gave to Kaṭha the desired knowledge, who is the lord of intellect and the poet among poets."

स्वनाथं प्रधानं महाविघ्ननाथं निजेच्छाविसृष्टाण्डवृन्देशनाथम्।
प्रभुं दक्षिणास्यस्य विद्याप्रदं त्वां कविं बुद्धिनाथं कवीनां नमामि॥ २॥

"My obeisance to the self controlled and the chief among gods, the lord of obstacles, the lord of galaxy of universes created and protected by Him, who is the lord of *Dakṣiṇāsya* and protector also, who is the lord of intellect and the poet among poets."

विभो व्यासशिष्यादिविद्याविशिष्टप्रियानेकविद्याप्रदातारमाद्यम्।
महाशाक्तदीक्षागुरुं श्रेष्ठदं त्वां कविं बुद्धिनाथं कवीनां नमामि॥ ३॥

"My obeisance to You O all-pervasive. You are the primeval teacher of all those like Vyāsa and his other disciples who were in search of real knowledge; who was the *Guru* initiating the great *Mantra* of *Śakti*; bestower of ultimate good; the lord of intellect and the poet among the poets."

विधात्रे त्रयीमुख्यवेदांश्च योगं महाविष्णवे चागमाञ्शंकराय।
दिशन्तं च सूर्याय विद्यारहस्यं कविं बुद्धिनाथं कवीनां नमामि॥ ४॥

"My obeisance to Lord Gaṇeśa who taught the three *Vedas* (*Ṛk*, *Yajuḥ* and *Sāma*) to Lord Brahmā, *Yoga* to Lord Viṣṇu and *Āgamas* (scriptures other than the Vedic ones) to Lord Śiva and the secret of spiritual knowledge to sun-god, the lord of intellect and the poet among the poets."

महाबुद्धिपुत्राय चैकं पुराणं दिशन्तं गजास्यस्य माहात्म्ययुक्तम्।
निजज्ञानशक्त्या समेतं पुराणं कविं बुद्धिनाथं कवीनां नमामि॥५॥

"My obeisance to Lord Gaṇeśa who taught the *Purāṇa* consisting of grandeur and splendour of His own self, who is always accompanied by His own power of knowledge and who is the ancient most, the lord of intellect and the poet among the poets."

त्रयीशीर्षसारं रुचानेकमारं रमाबुद्धिदारं परं ब्रह्मपारम्।
सुरस्तोमकायं गणौघाधिनाथं कविं बुद्धिनाथं कवीनां नमामि॥६॥

"My obeisance to the Lord Gaṇeśa who is the quintessence of *Vedānta*, who destroyed with His sharp splendour the hosts of demons; who has Lakṣmī and Buddhi as His wives, who is infinite and Parabrahma, beyond the *Vedas;* who holds all the gods in His cosmic body; who is the lord of *Gaṇas,* the lord of intellect and the poet among the poets."

चिदानन्दरूपं मुनिध्येयरूपं गुणातीतमीशं सुरेशं गणेशम्।
धरानन्दलोकादिवासप्रियं त्वां कविं बुद्धिनाथं कवीनां नमामि॥७॥

"My obeisance to Lord Gaṇeśa, the consciousness and bliss incarnate, always meditated upon by the seers, beyond the three *Guṇas*, the lord of gods and *Gaṇas*, who likes to have His abode on the earth and *Ānandaloka*, who is the lord of intellect and the poet among the poets."

अनेकप्रतारं सुरक्ताब्जहारं परं निर्गुणं विश्वसद्ब्रह्मरूपम्।
महावाक्यसंदोहतात्पर्यमूर्तिं कविं बुद्धिनाथं कवीनां नमामि॥८॥

"My obeisance to Lord Gaṇeśa who was capable of making His devotees cross the mire of the world, who wears the garland of red lotus flowers, who is attributeless, at the same time the base of cosmos, Absolute *Brahma*, who has, the intent of *Mahāvākyas* like *Tattvamasi*, as His body the lord of intellect and the poet among the poets."

इदं ये तु कव्यष्टकं भक्तियुक्तास्त्रिसंध्यं पठन्ते गजास्यं स्मरन्तः।
कवित्वं सुवाक्यार्थमत्यद्भुतं ते लभन्ते प्रसादाद् गणेशस्य मुक्तिम्॥९॥

"Those who recite this *Kavyaṣṭaka* three times daily with faith and devotion meditating upon Lord Gaṇeśa, get by His grace, the capacity of composing beautiful poems and even final liberation."

Prayer to Lord Gaṇeśa by Śaṅkarācārya

मुदा करात्तमोदकं सदा विमुक्तिसाधकं
कलाधरावतंसकं विलासिलोकरञ्जकम्।
अनायकैकनायकं विनाशितेभदैत्यकं
नताशुभाशुनाशकं नमामि तं विनायकम्॥ १॥

"I pay my obeisance to Lord Gaṇeśa who is happily holding *Modaka* in His hand, who always bestows liberation to His devotees, whose forehead is ornamented by a crescent moon, who is a bestower of happiness and bliss to those having faith and devotion to Him, whose lord is nobody but who Himself is the lord of everyone, who destroyed the terrible Gajāsura,who destroys every inauspicious thing of those who bow their head to Him."

नतेतरातिभीकरं नवोदितार्कभास्वरं
नमत्सुरारिनिर्जरं नताधिकापदुद्धरम्।
सुरेश्वरं निधीश्वरं गजेश्वरं गणेश्वरं
महेश्वरं तमाश्रये परात्परं निरन्तरम्॥ २॥

"I pay my obeisance to Lord Vināyaka who is a source of terror to those who do not salute Him, who is effulgent like a newly rising sun, who is saluted by gods and demons alike, who is liberator of those who come to His refuge, who is lord of gods, treasures, elephants, *Gaṇas* and who is the Supreme Lord beyond the infinite, the Absolute."

समस्तलोकशंकरं निरस्तदैत्यकुञ्जरं
दरेतरोदरं वरं वरेभवक्त्रमक्षरम्।
कृपाकरं क्षमाकरं मुदाकरं यशस्करं
नमस्करं नमस्कृतां नमस्करोमि भास्वरम्॥ ३॥

"I pay my obeisance to the effulgent Lord Gaṇeśa, who is benevolent to the entire cosmos, who destroyed the demon in the shape of an elephant, who is pot-bellied, the best and superiormost,

imperishable and elephant-faced; who is merciful and a treasure of bliss and pardon, who bestows fame and happiness to those who salute Him."

अकिंचनार्तिमार्जनं चिरंतनोक्तिभाजनं
पुरारिपूर्वनन्दनं सुरारिगर्वचर्वणम्।
प्रपञ्चनाशभीषणं धनंजयादिभूषणं
कपोलदानवारणं भजे पुराणवारणम्॥ ४॥

"I pay my obeisance to Lord Gaṇeśa who removes the miseries of poors coming to His refuge, whom the *Vedas* always describe and sing, who is the elder son of Lord Śiva, the killer of Tripura, who always breaks the pride and ego of the demons, who adopts a terrific form at the time of dissolution of the cosmos, who is holding as His ornaments the serpents like Dhanañjaya etc., from whose temples the ichor continuously flows, and who is the eternal and primeval god."

नितान्तकान्तदन्तकान्तिमन्तकान्तकात्मज-
मचिन्त्यरूपमन्तहीनमन्तरायकृन्तनम् ।
हृदन्तरे निरन्तरं वसन्तमेव योगिनां
तमेकदन्तमेव तं विचिन्तयामि संततम्॥ ५॥

"I meditate upon the Lord Gaṇeśa whose lustre of tusks is extremely wonderful, who is the son of Lord Śiva (the killer of the lord of death), whose form is infinite and beyond the ken of meditation, who is annihilator of all obstacles and who has His abode in the hearts of *Yogīs* and His devotees."

महागणेशपञ्चरत्नमादरेण योऽन्वहं
प्रगायति प्रभातके हृदि स्मरन् गणेश्वरम्।
अरोगतामदोषतां सुसाहितीं सुपुत्रतां
समाहितायुरष्टभूतिमभ्युपैति सोऽचिरात्॥ ६॥

"The person who recites early in the morning this *Mahāgaṇeśa Pañcaratna* with faith and devotion, meditating upon Lord Gaṇeśa in a loud voice, quickly attains good health, untaintedness, opportunity of reading good books and accompaniment of saints, worthy sons, long life and eight *Siddhis*."

Morning Prayer

प्रातः स्मरामि गणनाथमनाथबन्धुं सिन्दूरपूरपरिशोभितगण्डयुग्मम्।
उद्दण्डविघ्नपरिखण्डनचण्डदण्ड माखण्डलादिसुरनायकवृन्दवन्द्यम्॥

"I remember in the morning Lord Gaṇeśa who is the saviour of poors and orphans; whose temples are besmeared with vermilion powder; who is like a terrific stick (*Daṇḍa*) to punish and destroy the formidable obstacles and who is always adored by Indra the lord of gods."

प्रातर्नमामि चतुराननवन्द्यमानमिच्छानुकूलमखिलं च वरं ददानम्।
तं तुन्दिलं द्विरसनाधिपयज्ञसूत्रं पुत्रं विलासचतुरं शिवयोः शिवाय॥

"I remember in the morning the Lord Gaṇeśa whom the four-faced god Brahmā offers adoration to; who bestows boons as desired by His devotees; who is having a pot-belly; who wears the sacred thread of snakes; the son of Lord Śiva and mother Pārvatī, a skillful player."

प्रातर्भजाम्यभयदं खलु भक्तशोकदावानलं गणविभुं वरकुञ्जरास्यम्।
अज्ञानकाननविनाशनहव्यवाहमुत्साहवर्धनमहं सुतमीश्वरस्य॥

"I adore that Lord Gaṇeśa in the morning who is remover of all fears; who is the fire incarnate to burn the grief of His devotees; the lord of *Gaṇas*, elephant-faced; who is like fire to destroy the forest of ignorance; who is always encouraging and who is the son of the Lord Supreme—Śiva."

श्लोकत्रयमिदं पुण्यं सदा साम्राज्यदायकम्।
प्रातरुत्थाय सततं यः पठेत् प्रयतः पुमान्॥

"One who recites these three purifying verses getting up early in the morning with faith, devotion and *Yoga*, gets emperorship."

An Apology

अजं निर्विकल्पं निराकारमेकं
निरानन्दमानन्दमद्वैतपूर्णम् ।
परं निर्गुणं निर्विशेषं निरीहं
परं ब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम ॥

I adore Lord Gaṇeśa—the Supreme Reality who is birthless, formless, undifferentiated, one without a second, Bliss Absolute, transcendent, attributeless and desireless.

In every Hindu house Lord Gaṇeśa is worshipped. On any auspicious ceremony he gets the top priority in His worship. On *Dīpāvalī* day (the festival of lights) every businessman rather every householder worships Lord Gaṇeśa. It is so because he is considered the dispeller of all hurdles and obstacles in household life and bestower of 'ऋद्धि' (riches) and 'सिद्धि' (success).

This god is known by various names such as Ekadanta (one-tusked), Gajānana (elephant-faced), Gaṇapati (lord of the people), Heramba (glutton), Lambodara (pendent), Vakratuṇḍa (twisted trunk), Vighneśvara (dispeller of obstacles) and Vināyaka (the leader).

Gaṇeśa is worshipped not only in all parts of India, He is worshipped in some of the Asian countries too mainly Burma, Nepal, China, Japan, Combodia and Thailand and some parts of America. In India worship of Gaṇeśa is very popular particularly in Maharashtra where he is the family deity of most of the persons, whereas in other parts of India he is worshipped mainly on auspicious ceremonies. Although practically every town and village of Maharashtra would have at least one grand temple, centre of

Gaṇeśa-worship. Procession with big images of Gaṇeśa are taken out through the streets of the towns of Maharashtra.

People generally know Gaṇeśa only as the son of Lord Śiva and Pārvatī. In reality Lord Gaṇeśa is the Supreme Power, Supreme Reality, the transcendent God. He is birthless, eternal and immanent in each particle of the universe. He has manifested himself as Gaṇeśa—son of Śiva and Pārvatī. While worshipping Gaṇeśa we must know this fact that Gaṇeśa is the Supreme God, not merely the son of Śiva and Pārvatī.

The *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* relates that while creating this universe, Brahmā forgot to worship Lord Gaṇeśa. Therefore he had to face a series of obstacles in the process. He could succeed in creating this universe only when he realised his mistake and worshipped Lord Gaṇeśa.

From the above fact it is evident that Lord Gaṇeśa is no other than the unborn omnipresent, all powerful and eternal God himself, and deserves fore-worship (अग्रपूजा) in all counts and on all fronts.

Therefore first of all I bow before Lord Gaṇeśa and I dedicate this special issue *Gaṇeśa Number* to Lord Gaṇeśa. This very Lord is manifesting Himself in all forms. Whatever is seen, heard, known and thought is nothing else but the divinity itself. He has assumed all the forms and there is nothing besides Him 'सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म नेह नानास्ति किंचन'. Thus we can worship Him in any form. God is formless as well as with form. That God manifests himself in the form of Brahmā, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Durgā and Gaṇeśa. All the worshippers of divinity worship either of these five forms. But all these forms are manifestations of the same divinity by whatever name you may call Him. Lord Gaṇeśa here as depicted by us, is the same Supreme Reality.

These different forms of divinity are according to the different liking of various devotees. But God is one and the same.

This divinity in the form of Gaṇeśa is the unknown and omnipresent, essence of all things; it is all-pervading and an infinite being. He permeates the whole universe. He is beyond time, space

and causation. If you think a bit deep, you will realise that Lord Gaṇeśa is the ultimate space, ultimate time and ultimate cause, all beings and spheres rest in Him. This *Gaṇeśa Tattva* has its real existence and all other existences and entities are dependent on Him for their existence. Unless this fact is realised we cannot be able to grasp the real *Gaṇeśa Tattva*. This attempt is made to enable our readers to grasp this *Tattva*.

Attracted by the intense love of His devotees Lord Gaṇeśa granted visions to them in many forms. Samartha Swāmī Rāmadāsa had such vision and many other devotees had also vision of Lord Gaṇeśa.

This compilation is made also with a view to enlighten the people with various aspects of Lord Gaṇeśa. Here we are giving a list of various books relating to Lord Gaṇeśa to enable the readers to acquire more knowledge about Lord Gaṇeśa if they so desire.

Gaṇeśa Tattva is beyond the ken of speech, mind and intellect. It is one without a second. He is within all and all are within Him. The word 'all' is from our standpoint as to us all that is visible has separate entities,otherwise, He is all. There is nothing except manifestations of Gaṇeśa in His transcendent state. He alone exists and all merge in Him. The aim of human life is to have such realization. I hope that our kind readers will read this issue with great interest and this will inspire in them spiritual thoughts. This will help them in grasping *Gaṇeśa Tattva*. I hope this may mould their lives towards adoration of Lord Gaṇeśa with greater love and faith and rendering selfless service to all beings animate or inanimate who are nothing else than manifestations of Lord Gaṇeśa.

In this process of our work, we have had to read, repeat mentally as well as in writing the holy name of Lord Gaṇeśa several hundred times if not more which alone would go a long way to purify our heart and take us nearer the goal of human life i. e., God-realization. In short whatever pains we have taken in connection with this work they have conduced us to spiritual upliftment and we think our labours have been already more than repaid. If there is anything

creditable in this issue, the credit exclusively goes to Lord Gaṇeśa Himself who has inspired this undertaking and propelled His devotees to consecrate to Him their writings in His various aspects. It is He who has made us instruments and we express our gratitude to Him.

It also needs mentioning that due to shortage of space and lack of contributions, some subjects already announced in the list of subjects proposed to be discussed in this number could not be touched while some subjects have been imperfectly discussed. The subjects chosen for the present number can be studied from such a variety of standpoints that we feel we could not do proper justice to it in spite of the valuable help we received from our learned contributors. An appropriate harmony could not be maintained in the arrangement and order of the articles. This is also due to our own shortcomings and imperfection and our utter incompetence in shouldering the responsibility of editing this number. We trust that saintly and the learned contributors will kindly forgive us for the errors that may have crept into this special issue either through oversight or through our ignorance of the subject or our imperfect knowledge of the English language. We also seek an apology to those of our contributors whose articles have been rendered English translation from Hindi and whose ideas we may have failed to bring out clearly and faithfully in the translation.

An apology is also sought from such contributors whose articles have not been included in this number due to shortage of space or due to other reasons.

Before concluding this note I desire to express my sincere gratitude to patrons and learned contributors without whose help and co-operation it would have been impossible to bring out this issue in this present form. I express my thanks to my colleagues and staff who extended valuable help in this attempt.

In the end I again express my gratitude to Lord Gaṇeśa for the success in compilation of this issue.

—*Editor*

OM

THE KALYANA-KALPATARU

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गाइये गनपति जगबंदन।
संकर-सुवन भवानी-नंदन॥ १॥
सिद्धि-सदन, गज-बदन, बिनायक।
कृपा-सिंधु, सुंदर, सब-लायक॥ २॥
मोदक-प्रिय, मुद-मंगल-दाता।
बिद्या-बारिधि, बुद्धि-बिधाता॥ ३॥
माँगत तुलसिदास कर जोरे।
बसहिं रामसिय मानस मोरे॥ ४॥

"Let us sing the glory of the Lord Gaṇapati, adorable to the whole world; the son of Śiva and Pārvatī and the cause of Her happiness; abode of all accomplishments; elephant-faced; Vināyaka (the Supreme Leader having no leader to lead Him); the ocean of compassion; most handsome; competent in every respect; Modaka-loving; bestower of bliss and welfare; the ocean of knowledge and lord of intellect. Tulasīdāsa with his joined hands begs of the Lord that Rāma and Sītā do make their abode in his heart."

(*Vinaya Patrikā*)